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SIR THOMAS FAIRFAX AND THE  
FIRST CIVIL WAR: 1642-1646  
A MILITARY BIOGRAPHY

by



DAVID EVANS

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, Thomas Fairfax is one of the most ignored men in the entire period of the English Civil Wars, and like all others is always seen in the shadow of the colossus, Oliver Cromwell. In the three hundred years that have passed since his death, only two biographies have been written about him. One, by Sir Clements R. Markham, is solid and thorough in detail, but suffers from being over a hundred years old. The other, by M.A. Gibb, is merely Markham in a new suit of clothes, and is itself approaching its fortieth year since first publication. When one considers the huge amount of writings that have appeared on Cromwell, it is disappointing to find that his contemporaries are so neglected.

Perhaps one of the greatest criticisms that can be levelled at many historians of this era is that they are afflicted with the chronic disease of hindsight. Consequently, they see Oliver Cromwell the Lord Protector of 1653 in the junior cavalry commander of 1642. All events are carefully inspected to detect the great man's presence, and men like Fairfax are relegated to the background and lost in the dazzle of the passing meteorite.

This thesis will be an attempt to shed light on the





importance of Fairfax in the eventual outcome of the first Civil War, and to show how the victory of parliament is, in great measure, attributable to his endeavour. By its very nature, the thesis will lean in large part toward the military, for when one writes about a soldier, of necessity, one must write about war. Cromwell figures prominently in the latter half, but has been kept in a proper perspective. It should be pointed out that he never once commanded an army in the first Civil War, but was always a subordinate -at first to the earl of Manchester, and then to Fairfax. After February of 1645, it was Fairfax who planned the campaign that ultimately destroyed the King and crushed the royalist armies. His brilliance at soldiering provided the New Model Army with the leadership that it needed to turn the tide of war in favour of parliament. He gambled and took risks -Cromwell gave advice, but obeyed orders.





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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

<u>CSP Dom.</u>	<u>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic.</u>
<u>CSP Ire.</u>	<u>Calendar of State Papers, Ireland.</u>
<u>CSP Ven.</u>	<u>Calendar of State Papers, Venetian.</u>
<u>DNB.</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography.</u>
<u>FC Charles I.</u>	<u>The Fairfax Correspondence, Memoirs of the Reign of Charles I.</u>
<u>FC Civil War.</u>	<u>The Fairfax Correspondence, Memorials of the Civil War.</u>
Fairfax.	Thomas, Third Lord, <u>Short Memorials of Some Things to be cleared during my Command in the Army (1645 to 1650 A.D.,) and A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions; during the War There, from the Year 1642 till the Year 1644.</u>
<u>HMC.</u>	<u>Historical Manuscripts Commission.</u>
Markham.	<u>A Life of the Great Lord Fairfax.</u>
Sprigge.	<u>Sprigge, Reverend Joshua. Anglia Rediviva; England's Recovery, being the History of the Motions, Actions, and Successes of the Army under the Immediate Conduct of his Excellency Sir Thomas Fairfax, Knight, Captain-General of all the Parliament's Forces in England.</u>



## INTRODUCTION

This introduction will include a breakdown of the schema of the thesis, a brief note on some of the sources consulted and an explanation of certain mechanical matters concerning style.

The first chapter deals with the early life and career of Thomas Fairfax until the outbreak of the first Civil War in August of 1642. This will also include a broad survey of the Fairfax family, but will deal principally with Thomas and his father, Ferdinando Lord Fairfax. Ferdinando is included because he is important in the early stages of the war, and must be given credit for his achievements in Yorkshire, but the greater part of the chapter will be concerned with the early career of Thomas. In effect it will illustrate the making of a soldier, and will discuss his "blooding" in the Low Countries, his marriage, his involvement in the local events in Yorkshire leading up to the Civil War, and the stand of the Fairfax family as the outbreak of hostilities becomes imminent.

The second chapter covers only two years, from the time that Thomas and his father declare for parliament until his appointment as the Commander-in-Chief of all the parliamentary forces in February of 1645. The bulk of the





chapter will be concerned with the events of the Yorkshire campaigns and the struggle against the earl of Newcastle, and the resulting triumph at Marston Moor. It will also illustrate how Fairfax quickly made a name for himself as a soldier of great ability.

The third chapter will trace the events leading up to the Self-Denying Ordinance and the decision to appoint Fairfax as Commander-in-Chief of the New Model Army. It will also include a discussion of how the army was "new-modelled" under the direction of Fairfax and General Sir Philip Skippon. (The New Model Army was not created by Oliver Cromwell, as is so often erroneously believed.) The latter part of the chapter will deal with the activities of the New Model Army in the field in the spring of 1645, and the subsequent shattering defeat that Fairfax inflicted upon the King at the battle of Naseby.

The fourth chapter will be an account of the war in the west country, and will include the battle of Langport, the last major battle of the first Civil War, the siege and fall of Bristol and the ultimate collapse of the royalist cause. The siege and surrender of Oxford effectively ended the first Civil War.

The last chapter, in the form of an epilogue and conclusion, will deal primarily with Fairfax's actions in the second Civil War and his attitude towards the circumstances of the King's trial and execution. Finally it will



discuss the events leading up to his resignation from the command of the army, and his subsequent retirement from public life. His reemergence at the time of the restoration will conclude the thesis.

When writing a biography, one is always gratified to have access to memoirs and correspondence. In the case of Thomas Fairfax, it is fortunate for the investigator that despite his labours in the saddle he found time to write numerous letters to his father in Yorkshire. After his retirement, and approximately about 1665, he wrote an account of his actions during the first and second Civil Wars. Without these sources, his biographer would face an awesome task in recreating many of the events of his life. A biographer should allow a man to speak for himself as often as possible, and thus I have relied heavily on both his memoirs and letters. The first part of his memoirs and the family correspondence provide an excellent source for a "blow-by-blow" account of the Yorkshire wars. Surprisingly, he says nothing in his memoirs about the Naseby campaign and the western war beyond: "yet still it pleased God to give the Army such success in the years 1645 and 1646, that there remained in England neither army nor fortress to oppose the Parliament in settling the peace of the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> However, his letters compensate for the lacuna in his own writings.

The second part of Fairfax's memoirs deal with the



events of the late 1640s, and in effect seem to be a vindication of his own conduct and an attempt to explain his inability to cope with the political turmoil that he saw around him. As C.H. Firth has pointed out, "The feebleness of Fairfax as a politician was in striking contrast to his vigour and boldness as a soldier."<sup>2</sup> It is too easy to suspect that Fairfax was guaranteeing his own safety by explaining away his involvement with the "rebels" as the certainty of the restoration of Charles II became more apparent, but then one remembers that his memoirs were written a number of years after that event.

Beyond "Fairfax" material, a most invaluable work was the account of the Naseby campaign and western war written by the New Model Army chaplain, Joshua Sprigge. His eyewitness reports provided much information unavailable elsewhere. Also of great value were the various collections of the State Papers, the mammoth folios of the House of Commons, the compilations of the antiquarian, John Rushworth and the many memoirs left by combatants on both sides. Of a secondary nature, Markham's biography, despite its archaic prose and partisan nature, provided much background information on Yorkshire and solved many problems of chronology.

Spelling has been modernized throughout the text of the thesis, so as to minimize the demands made upon the reader. Punctuation, however, has been left in the original





unless the seventeenth century penchant for commas and semi-colons has so clouded the meaning that their presence has beggared understanding.

There is also a problem with dates. For the Englishman of the period the year began on 25 March. Adding to this confusion is the fact that the Julian Calendar used in England was ten days behind the Gregorian Calendar of continental Europe. Therefore, as an example, the date of the execution of Charles I in England was 30 January 1648, but in France the same day was 9 February 1649. To be consistent with common practise among British historians, all dates have been left in the original, but the year has been modernized and begins at 1 January.



## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Fairfax, pp.355-56.

<sup>2</sup>C.H. Firth, ed., An English Garner: Stuart Tracts  
1603-1693 (London, 1903), xxv.





## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EARLY LIFE AND CAREER OF THOMAS FAIRFAX UNTIL THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR (1612-1642)

I must needs say my judgement was for the Parliament,  
as the King's, and Kingdom's, great and safest Council,  
as others were for the King and averse to Parliament,  
as if it could not go high enough for the Prerogative.

Thomas Lord Fairfax

By the time of the outbreak of the English Civil War, the family of Thomas Fairfax had long been established in the county of Yorkshire. The Fairfaxes had been very active in local affairs, and over the years had become substantial landowners, with fairly large holdings in the area of Denton in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

However, as with many important families of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the origins of the Fairfax family are lost in the mists of early medieval England, and consequently any investigator of its ancestry is confronted by a murky realm of speculation. It seems almost certain though that the progenitors of the English family



were Saxon, as the word "Fairfax," and its many variations in spelling, means simply "fair-hair."

Little reliable information concerning the family exists before the fifteenth century as the available records are for the most part silent. Fortunately, it has been ascertained that the Fairfaxes first settled in the area of Towcester, in Northumberland.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the Fairfaxes would have clashed with the foraging Scots on a number of occasions, and perhaps for this reason they moved south sometime in the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> At this time, the Fairfaxes seem to have divided into two distinct lines. The family which was to produce Thomas Fairfax moved south-west into Yorkshire, where it consolidated and prospered. The other branch appears to have moved further south into Lincolnshire, and this is most probably the origin of the Fairfax family that emerged later in Suffolk, and which constantly claimed kinship with its more illustrious northern relatives.<sup>3</sup> This branch eventually sank into near obscurity.

Throughout the later middle ages, the Fairfax family in Yorkshire enlarged its holdings through various marriage connections and grants of monastic lands at the time of the dissolution, and by the reign of Elizabeth had accumulated a substantial block of lands centred around Denton, which is a few miles north of the modern cities of Bradford and Leeds. Owing to its wealth and influence, the Fairfax family rapidly became one of the more prominent families in local county



affairs, and eventually offered its members as regular contestants in the election of parliamentary representatives for the boroughs and county of Yorkshire. The increasing authority of the family in the hotly disputed elections with the powerful Saviles, Mauleverers and Slingsbys is excellently illustrated in an account of a meeting of candidates in 1597, at which an exasperated Sir John Savile, trying to break a deadlock between nominees for a second county representative, thundered at the crowd, "Will you have a Mauleverer or a Fairfax?"<sup>4</sup>

During the greater part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Fairfax family supplied local county courts with a number of competent justices of the peace and sheriffs. In addition, and on a more sophisticated level, a Robert Fairfax, presumably a relative, but whose connection to the family remains obscure, became a composer of songs to Henry VIII. This "great Dr. Fairfax" received Henry's patronage until he died in 1529.<sup>5</sup>

Above all, and like many of its contemporaries, the Fairfax family was noted for its contribution of soldiers for service as mercenaries abroad. Thus it comes as no surprise that Thomas Fairfax was such a successful general when one considers that his exposure to the martial arts began practically at birth. Rarely was there an occasion when a Fairfax was not bearing arms abroad. This inclination toward warfare, and the eagerness by which it was manifested,





were most probably the result of the momentous religious upheaval that had occurred within England during the sixteenth century. With regard to the Reformation in England, the Fairfax family had, for the most part, embraced the new faith and accepted the doctrinal innovations that had been introduced under Edward VI and firmly established by the end of the reign of Elizabeth. Consequently, the Fairfaxes served willingly in Elizabeth's armies in the Low Countries, and later with the English mercenaries in Germany during the early years of the Thirty Years War.

Through the passage of years, the Yorkshire branch of the Fairfax family divided into various lines. The particular line from which Thomas Fairfax sprang can be traced back, with certainty, to its founder, Sir Guy Fairfax of Steeton. He served as Chief Justice of the King's Bench from about 1485. According to the available evidence, it seems that he held this position throughout the civil wars of the latter half of the fifteenth century and died in office, in 1495, during the reign of Henry VII.<sup>6</sup> He was succeeded by his son, Sir William Fairfax of Steeton, who became a justice of the Court of Common Pleas. Little else is known about this man, except that he died in 1517, and passed on the estates to his son, another Sir William Fairfax of Steeton.<sup>7</sup> In 1518, this man married Isabel Thwaites, an orphan and heiress to the Denton estates and various properties within the walls of the city of York, and thereby added them to the family's



land-holdings and possessions. This financially rewarding marriage produced two sons. Nothing of importance is known about the elder son, Gabriel, except that he died very early in life. The younger, who was named Thomas, fought as a mercenary on the continent. His father, unaffected by the religious turmoil around him, an exception in the Fairfax family, remained a catholic throughout his life. It is known that in 1527 he cursed Thomas for his participation in the sack of Rome, while serving in the army of the Emperor Charles V, and swore to deny him his patrimony. However, when Sir William died, Thomas managed to secure the Denton and Nunappleton estates despite his father's attempt to disinherit him.<sup>8</sup> Denton and Nunappleton now became the ancestral homes of this branch of the Fairfax family.

Thomas Fairfax married Dorothy Gale, daughter of George Gale, Lord Mayor of York, sometime in the 1550s, and settled at Denton after having terminated his soldiering in Germany and Italy. His wife bore him three sons and three daughters. The youngest son, Edward, born about 1580, leaned toward the contemplative and scholarly life, and is best remembered for his translation of Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata. He wrote various other works, including a treatise on witchcraft. The middle son, Sir Charles, about whom little is known, was born about 1567, and fought as a mercenary soldier in the Low Countries. He is thought to



have been killed in 1604 while fighting against the Spaniards under Spinola at the siege of Ostend, where reputedly, but possibly apocryphally, he was struck by the flying skull of a French marshal who had been shattered by a cannonball.<sup>9</sup>

The eldest son, Thomas, was born in 1560, and succeeded his father in 1600.<sup>10</sup> By the time that his father died, Thomas Fairfax had married Ellen Aske, a descendant of the Robert Aske who had led the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, and had fathered seven sons and two daughters. As a young man he had fought in Germany, France and the Low Countries.<sup>11</sup> He had served under the famous Sir Francis Vere, and had been knighted at Rouen by the earl of Essex in 1591.<sup>12</sup> Towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, he served her in a diplomatic capacity, often acting as a courier, in her relations with James VI of Scotland, and on that monarch's accession to the throne of England, he was one of the first to swear allegiance to him.<sup>13</sup> On several occasions he sat as a member of parliament; representing Lincoln in 1586, Aldborough in 1588 and the county of York in 1601.<sup>14</sup> He was in his fortieth year when he became the new master of Denton, and after the accession of James I, he seems to have retired into private life. He spent his time on his estates breeding horses and raising his brood of children.

Although respected and admired by his sons, Sir Thomas Fairfax seems to have been a fiery and commanding figure. He liked to be obeyed, and ran his household with





a military rigour, perhaps the result of his years of hard campaigning. Later in life he faded and kept to his chair: a bad-tempered, old man capable of only vocal thunderbolts. In 1627, after drawing up a statement of his services, he paid 1500l. and was granted a title in the Scottish peerage, and for the remainder of his life he was the first Lord Fairfax of Cameron.<sup>15</sup> He lived to be eighty and died in 1640.

As an old soldier himself, Sir Thomas Fairfax urged his sons to emulate his exploits, and at one time or another most of them saw action on the continent. Unfortunately, it was to cost him dearly. The year 1621 saw the death in action of four of his seven sons. William and Thomas were killed in the Palatinate at the siege of Frankenthal.<sup>16</sup> Peregrine was killed at La Rochelle, and another son, John, seems to have met his death in Turkey.<sup>17</sup> Of his remaining three sons, Charles, born in 1597, became a lawyer and antiquary, but later figured prominently in the Civil War and subsequent restoration.<sup>18</sup> Henry, born in 1588, became a clergyman and fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.<sup>19</sup> His eldest son, Ferdinando, who eventually succeeded him in 1640 as the second Lord Fairfax of Cameron, was born in 1584,<sup>20</sup> and although definite details of his activities are vague and suspect, he seems to have served in the Low Countries for a period of time. It is evident, however, that Sir Thomas thought little of his son's military ability as he was



known to berate him for his apparent reluctance and seeming cowardice.<sup>21</sup> Needless to say, Ferdinando's service abroad was quite short.

In 1607, Ferdinando married Mary Sheffield, daughter of Lord Sheffield, President of the Council of the North.<sup>22</sup> This marriage produced two sons and six daughters. Thomas, the eldest son, and future commander of all the armies of parliament during the Civil War, was born at Denton on 17 January 1612,<sup>23</sup> and was baptised on the twenty-fifth of that month at Otley.<sup>24</sup> The second son, Charles, was born there in 1614, and relatively nothing is known about him, except that he studied at Leiden, in Holland, and was eventually killed at the battle of Marston Moor.<sup>25</sup>

The early years of Thomas Fairfax's life, like those of many of his contemporaries, are for the most part undocumented, and consequently only the briefest information can be provided. It is known that he grew up on his father's estates, and it would be reasonable to speculate that his irascible, old grandfather must have influenced his development greatly at this stage. Early in the 1620s, Thomas was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge. He matriculated from there in 1626.<sup>26</sup> In 1628, he was admitted to Gray's Inn,<sup>27</sup> and a year later, following what had almost become a Fairfax tradition, he went to fight as a mercenary in the Low Countries, in the service of the celebrated warrior, Sir Horace Vere, who was the leader of



the English mercenary force sent to assist the Dutch in their struggle with the Spaniards.

In February of 1629, Ferdinando wrote to his father and told him that he had been urged to send Thomas to the Low Countries by the earl of Clare, who suggested that he be sent there in order to learn the martial arts and certain other gentlemanly qualities.<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly, this arrangement was to the immense satisfaction of Lord Fairfax, for he readily gave his approval.

By May of that same year, Thomas had joined Vere's camp at Hertogensbosch where the English contingent had united with the Dutch in the siege of that town.<sup>29</sup> In the earliest known holograph of his handwriting, Thomas wrote to his grandfather and described the nature of the conflict in which he was involved. He outlined the military strategy employed by the Dutch commander, Frederick Henry of Orange, and apologised for the hastiness of his letter as he was about to enter the actual fighting.<sup>30</sup> Although he took great pains to describe the geographical characteristics of the campaign, his first impressions of personal involvement in war have not come down to us, and even the length of his service under Vere remains a matter of speculation.

However, it is known that Thomas spent some time in France, where he occupied himself with learning.<sup>31</sup> He returned to England during the latter part of 1631, for he wrote to his grandfather, from where he was staying in





London, in February of 1632:

Let it not seem strange to your lordship, my sudden arrival in England. The reason which did induce me to it was my earnest desire to see the army of Sweden. Yet obedience first taught me to gain your lordship's willingness to it, which, if you please to grant me, as I earnestly beg it, I shall think myself happy....<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, Thomas took keenly to the soldier's life and desired that more than his educational excursion to France, where he "only learned the language, and knew war only by an uncertain relation."<sup>33</sup> His great admiration for Gustavus Adolphus, the chosen champion of the protestants, whose sweeping victories had shaken catholic Europe, was matched by his wish to join the Swedish army as a mercenary. This particular letter continues to reveal Thomas' enthusiasm as he attempts to persuade his grandfather. "Since my coming into England, I have received so much encouragement from my friends, and more especially from my noble lord Vere, which inanimated [encouraged] me much to so worthy an action."<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, Thomas' entreaties failed, as for reasons not known to us, old Lord Fairfax refused him permission. Perhaps by way of speculation, it is possible that Lord Fairfax contemplating the deaths of his own sons, felt greatly concerned with the safety of his grandson and eventual family heir. The life expectancy of Swedish soldiers and their allies was quite short in the heart of Germany, and thus Lord Fairfax's presumed fears were borne out when, but nine months later, the leonine Swedish king himself lay dead on



the battlefield. Ferdinando seems to have had little say in the matter, and Thomas absolutely none. Ironically, Thomas Fairfax would not leave English soil again until almost thirty years had passed by.

While serving in the Low Countries, Thomas was stricken with "camp-fever," possibly malaria, a disease that decimated armies in its intensity. Although he survived the attack, he suffered from recurring bouts for the rest of his life, and frequently during the Civil War he was brought near to total collapse as he shook uncontrollably, and also writhed with pain caused by a stomach ailment that had developed shortly after his return to England. In spite of the miseries of camp life, Thomas seems to have enjoyed himself immensely, and his youthful exuberance and enthusiasm were soon noticed by his commander, Lord Vere.<sup>35</sup> The two quickly became fast friends, and this relationship provided Thomas with the opportunity of meeting Lord Vere's daughter, Ann. On his return to England, he set out to seek her hand in marriage, but found that her mother, unlike her father who had died in 1635, presented a great difficulty. In February of 1636, Thomas wrote to his father from London, where he was visiting his aged maternal grandfather, Lord Sheffield, now the earl of Mulgrave, and attempting to press his suit with Lady Vere:

Since my coming to London, I have studied to do my best in effecting the business I came up about; but



whether my Lady Vere disliked me, the conditions, or us both, I cannot tell; but she put me off with an unwillingness to marry her daughter in a time of such perplexity as she pretends to be in. The money the King owes her is hard to get, and she is loth to impoverish herself by parting with anything that she has now; whether I should proceed farther in this business or no, I refer it to you....<sup>36</sup>

What exactly Ferdinando's advice was has not come down to us, but in spite of the disappointment of the preliminary refusal, Thomas was eventually successful, as he and Ann Vere were married on 20 June 1637.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps Lady Vere's lack of funds was rectified in part by Thomas, for nine days after the wedding he wrote to his grandfather and thanked him profusely for a gift of money from Yorkshire, which had been contributed towards the cost of the wedding.<sup>38</sup>

Thomas and his bride spent the summer months of 1637 at the Vere household in Hackney, then but a small village on the very outskirts of London. From this vantage point, he must have been very aware of events in the capital itself, and the remaining letters from this period of his life are devoted mainly to relaying the more important news items to his grandfather in Yorkshire. "The Bishop of Lincoln is now in the Tower, suspended from all his livings, and fined 10,000l. to the King," he wrote in July of 1637. "Yesterday, Prynne was sent to Caernarvon Castle, Burton to Lancaster, and Bastwick into Cornwall."<sup>39</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Thomas, considering his protestant upbringing, would have been most concerned with the punishments and persecution



inflicted upon the critics of the government's religious policy.

As the representative of the crown, Archbishop Laud struck mercilessly at recalcitrant ecclesiastics and writers of anti-catholic tracts, who regarded his "Anglicanism" as merely a means of disguising his intention to return to the church of Rome. This oppression could not go unnoticed, even by the gentry in far-off Yorkshire. However, a more immediate target for their anger was not Laud, but Thomas Wentworth, the Yorkshireman who had deserted the "common cause" and allied himself with the King, in whose service he had risen rapidly, but at the expense of his popularity in his home county. In the not too distant future, he would be destroyed, in great part, by those very men whom he alienated now.

The fact that Charles I was dominated by his catholic wife, influenced by the renewal of the presence of a papal agent, and surrounded himself with catholics in high office, was a source of constant frustration and resentment to many of the members of both houses of parliament. Perhaps this is one of the reasons, for he does not tell us himself, why Thomas removed his wife permanently to Yorkshire at the end of 1637, and settled down near his relatives at Nunappleton, which is a few miles south of the city of York.

Almost nothing is known of Thomas' activities in 1638, but it would appear that he spent his time on the estates, and making frequent visits to York on family





business. In the summer of that year Ann gave birth to a daughter, Mary.<sup>40</sup> During the following year another child was born. Unfortunately, this one, also a daughter, died in infancy. To his grandfather's utter dismay no sons were forthcoming.

Although Thomas played little part in local politics at this time, he did become a justice of the peace through the influence of his grandfather. "I would have Tom put into the commission of the peace, because you know I am not able to do anything and I would have my name left out," Lord Fairfax wrote to Ferdinando, "I have written to my Lord Chamberlain, who, I hope, will effect that which is required."<sup>41</sup> Thomas was appointed as a justice of the peace shortly after. This letter also reveals that Lord Fairfax was aware that he was rapidly nearing his end. As he approached his eightieth year, a considerable age for the period, he began to slip quickly into senility, and consequently most of his duties were passed onto his son and grandson.

Ferdinando, himself now well into his fifties, as heir apparent to both the barony and the estates, became the head representative of the Fairfax family. He was no newcomer to politics, as he had served as a member of parliament in 1614, and on no less than five occasions in the 1620s. He was elected member for Boroughbridge in April 1640, and for one of the cherished county of York seats in November 1640, by which time he had become the second Lord Fairfax of Cameron.<sup>42</sup>



Thomas remained in Yorkshire as the man at the local level. He saw to most of the running of the estates, and ensured that the prosperity of the family continued. He indulged his passion for breeding horses, which he inherited from his grandfather, and spent much of his time riding the moors on his conspicuously white horse. He was well-satisfied in his role as the loving husband and father, raising his daughter and fearing that she might inherit his delicate health and weak stomach. He was the dutiful grandson, obeying and tolerating his bad-tempered, old grandfather, whose ferocity diminished as his death neared. On many occasions his tall but slight frame was seen striding through the streets of York in the battered and weather-beaten boots that he had worn in the Low Countries, seeing to the upkeep of his family's possessions there. Many a felon must have paled before his dark, almost Spanish, countenance, which belied the meaning of his name, when he sat in his capacity as a justice of the peace. Like Thomas Wentworth, he received the nickname of "Black Tom."<sup>43</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, he was quite timid and introspective by nature. He spoke softly and reservedly, but stuttered uncontrollably when he became excited. Yet, as witnessed by his associates, he underwent a complete metamorphosis on the field of battle, and became a fury in his zeal for the fight. Emulating some of his ancestors, he took a great interest in learning, and during these quiet years he spent much time reading and writing, broadening his



knowledge of French and Italian, and translating some of the great works from classical Latin. Like Charles I, Thomas Fairfax considered himself a happy man, and he might have remained so had it not been for the explosion in Scotland.

In 1637 Charles I, recklessly pursuing the imbecilic career, remarkable only for its paucity of intellect, that his father had prophesied as his destiny, introduced a revised version of the English Prayer Book into Scotland. This action resulted in widespread opposition, for the Scots reacted violently toward English interference in their religious affairs. The King soon received disquieting reports concerning the troublesome mood that prevailed among his northern subjects, and listened uneasily to tales of stools being flung at the bishop of Edinburgh and loaded pistols being used to subdue the unruly congregation in Brechin.<sup>44</sup> Before long the religious insurrection developed into a full-scale national movement, and by the summer of 1638 the threat of war loomed large as the Scots signed a national covenant and began to arm themselves.<sup>45</sup>

Charles, determined to assert his authority, resorted to violence of his own, and began to collect an army, with which he intended to whip the rebellious Scots into submission. Orders were immediately issued to the six northern counties to prepare themselves for the coming conflict.<sup>46</sup> In the West Riding of Yorkshire, the commanders of the trained bands met and discussed the situation. Lord





Fairfax, now decrepit, and having almost lost the use of his wits, was noticeably absent.

The King came north and arrived in York on 30 March 1639, where he immediately faced the ubiquitous problem of finding money to pay an army. When financial matters were temporarily solved, the punitive expedition set out for Berwick, which was to be the assembly point for all the King's forces.

The Fairfaxes, despite the absence of the old Lord, were well represented. Ferdinando was commissioned as a colonel of a regiment in May, and Thomas accompanied him as a captain of horse, in command of 160 dragoons. In June, before the army set out, Lord Fairfax wrote to Thomas and exhorted him to "serve God with all your soul, and the King with all your heart," as his prayers would "always be for the King and the good success of the army."<sup>47</sup> Perhaps this blind faith in the assumption that the army would be victorious was the manifestation of a fading mind, for earlier, in May of that year, when the forces were beginning to gather, Thomas had written to his grandfather from York and voiced his alarm at the condition of the English troops:

My lord, we have no news from the north; the army is not yet got together; it will fare the worse when it does, for provisions are very scant. The forces there and on their march there, are 4,000 horse and 18,000 foot. We hear the Scots have written another letter to my lord of Essex; which he sent to the King before he broke it open. We have not yet heard the subject, but we may well think that these weighty matters cannot receive



an end from the small satisfaction of a letter....<sup>48</sup>

However, these "weighty matters" as it turned out were not settled on the battlefield, and the "small satisfaction of a letter" played a great part in giving the Scots a victory without a fight. The first "Bishops' War" came to an abrupt end when Charles, plagued once again by financial difficulties and increasing indifference on the part of his officers, reconsidered and opened negotiations with the Scots. The Treaty of Berwick, which momentarily settled the affair, was followed closely by the dispersal of the army, and thus Ferdinando and Thomas returned home.<sup>49</sup> Presumably, Thomas resumed his normal affairs for he found time to write to his mother-in-law, Lady Vere in Hackney. He informed her of the peace which had been achieved, but remarked prophetically, "I beseech God He would be pleased to preserve it from a relapse, which, if it were in the power of some, I might fear it would fall into."<sup>50</sup>

In April 1640 the King, reluctantly but necessarily, called his first parliament in eleven years. Under pressure from his advisers, and seeking a way out of his dilemma, Charles now attempted to enlist the support of the representatives of the country. Unfortunately, his hopes were dashed as he found them rebellious and openly hostile to his policy toward the Scots. Charles dissolved parliament before a month had passed and arrested the ringleaders of the opposition. Ferdinando Fairfax attended this "Short



Parliament," as member for Boroughbridge,<sup>51</sup> and must have left it with many memories that would affect his decision when it came to a civil war in 1642. On his return to Yorkshire, he found that while he was in London, his old father had finally died.<sup>52</sup> He was buried in the churchyard at Otley, in May 1640, and Ferdinando now became the second Lord Fairfax of Cameron.<sup>53</sup>

The activities of Thomas during this period are relatively unknown, and are thus subject to speculation. Although he had returned to Nunappleton, he still held his commission as a captain, and was ready to resume his command at a moment's notice. It would be reasonable to assume that he waited on events, continuing in his capacity as a justice of the peace and in his new appointment as commissioner for the improvement of waste lands.<sup>54</sup> Undoubtedly, he would have been very concerned with developments in Yorkshire itself. The southern levies of the King's army were kept in readiness for any movement on the part of the Scots, and because of this the Yorkshire tenantry had most of the common soldiery billeted upon them.<sup>55</sup> This situation aroused much resentment, as the local inhabitants considered the penniless soldiers to be unruly and vulgar louts. Frequent clashes resulted from this growing animosity.

In the summer of 1640 the Scots crossed the border, taking advantage of the King's weakness and the prevailing discontent in Yorkshire. Once again, the King rushed north



to York in an attempt to persuade the gentry to resist the invasion. Despite their many grievances and lack of enthusiasm, the Yorkshire commanders mustered the trained bands and joined the King's army. Ferdinando raised a hundred volunteers for the army, and Thomas marched north with his company, which was now reduced to sixty troopers. Thomas appears to have rejoined his troop sometime in the spring of 1640, for there is evidence, in the form of two letters, written in May, that he asked Edward Viscount Conway, Lieutenant-General of the King's army, for money to pay his men. By July, as Commissary-General Henry Wilmot mentions in his report on the progress of providing supplies for the army, Captain Fairfax had reached Yarm on the river Tees.<sup>56</sup>

The English army met the Scots at Newburn, in August, and was ridiculously defeated. The jubilant Scots marched on into Northumberland and occupied Newcastle. Faced with this critical situation, Charles decided to make one last attempt to secure aid. Realising that it was futile to approach the gentry, he now summoned the peerage to a great council at York. The peers, like the gentry before them, immediately bombarded Charles with grievances, revealed their unwillingness to wage war upon the Scots, and urged him to call a parliament. Charles, seeing that he had failed, reluctantly conceded and began to negotiate with the Scots. The Treaty of Ripon, an embarrassment to English arms, was





the result of the meetings that ended the second "Bishops' War." Charles agreed to pay the Scots 25,000l. a month, and allowed them to occupy Durham and Northumberland as a guarantee of his good faith.<sup>57</sup> The Scottish army would remain in England until the late summer of 1641, much to the annoyance of the Yorkshiremen who had to provide for the King's sentinels.

During the autumn of 1640 elections were held in Yorkshire. After much disputation, Ferdinando Lord Fairfax<sup>58</sup> and Henry Bellasis<sup>59</sup> were returned as representatives for the county of Yorkshire, narrowly defeating Sir William Savile and Sir Richard Hutton.<sup>60</sup> Ferdinando took his seat in November and thus witnessed the unprecedented events that followed. The House of Commons, led by Pym, proceeded to strike down its enemies. The aged Archbishop Laud was arrested and committed to the Tower, where he languished until his execution in January 1645. Secretary of State, Sir Francis Windebanke, and John Lord Finch, the newly appointed Lord Keeper, hastily fled abroad.

The earl of Strafford, as a consequence of his ill-chosen words, was impeached and taken into custody as he attempted to take his seat in the House of Lords. He was considered to be the architect of many of the evils that the crown had perpetrated upon the country, and was also greatly despised at the county level by a number of his fellow Yorkshiremen. During his tenure of office as Lord



President of the Council of the North Strafford had made many enemies. In the early 1630s, Strafford clashed with Thomas Lord Fauconberg who wrote to London complaining about his actions and charging him with injustice.<sup>61</sup> Strafford was not called to account by the Privy Council and the charges were eventually forgotten, but their initiator was not. Strafford missed no opportunity of interfering in and criticising Lord Fauconberg's handling of justice in the county courts. At the same time, he suspected that Ferdinando Fairfax and Henry Bellasis, Fauconberg's heir, were also a party to the plot to disgrace him.<sup>62</sup> Although relations between the Fairfax family and Strafford had been quite amicable up to this point, now they became very strained. There is also evidence that this bad feeling was exacerbated by a land dispute between Strafford and old Lord Fairfax.<sup>63</sup> In effect, the earl's impeachment gave the disgruntled Yorkshire gentry an opportunity to obtain their revenge.

The parliamentary committee created to bring about Strafford's impeachment was conspicuously peopled by several powerful Yorkshire landowners, including both Ferdinando Lord Fairfax and Henry Bellasis.<sup>64</sup> In addition, Yorkshire was strongly represented among the members who deliberated on the ultimate fate of Strafford, for some, as Clarendon remarked, "had received some disobligation from the earl," at one time or another.<sup>65</sup> However, after a time it became evident that



his impeachment was proving to be a lengthy and technically unsound business. To solve this problem, as Ferdinando wrote and told his brother, Henry, the committee "framed a short Bill to convict him of treason."<sup>66</sup>

The execution of the earl of Strafford, in May 1641, foreshadowed the collapse of Charles' control of affairs in London. The presentation and passing of the Grand Remonstrance finally began to dissolve any remaining chance of a reconciliation between the crown and parliament, and Charles, fearing for his own safety, hurriedly left the capital. Eventually, after a period of wandering and calculating, he arrived in York, in March 1642, where firmly believing in his ability to gather support, he intended to appeal to the Yorkshire gentry.

Yorkshire, not unlike other counties, was rapidly dividing into factions in the early months of 1642. In spite of the bad feeling caused by the crown's mishandling of the Scottish wars, the leading families who participated in the Civil War were for the most part loyal to the King. In fact, one historian has ascertained that, at the outbreak of hostilities, royalist families outnumbered parliamentary families by a ratio of almost two to one.<sup>67</sup> Those families who fought for parliament drew their support mainly from the West Riding clothiers, whose trade, already badly depressed, worsened as the country descended into political turmoil.<sup>68</sup> Also, the West Riding was indeed "Fairfax country," and thus





it is not surprising that the Yorkshire parliamentarians looked to the Fairfaxes to lead their cause. By May of 1642, Ferdinando had been appointed as a parliamentary commissioner, to attend the King and report any dealings with him to London.<sup>69</sup> Simultaneously, Thomas, exercising his authority as a justice of the peace, collaborated with the Yorkshire sheriffs and justices of the peace in the preparation of the trained bands.<sup>70</sup>

The King's arrival in York was viewed by those who sympathized with parliament with much foreboding, for it presaged his intention to fight rather than come to terms. While civil war was still not a certainty, its threat was ever-present, and the gentry voiced their apprehensions in several petitions which urged Charles to settle his differences with parliament before it was too late. That Thomas Fairfax's name can be found among the many signatories is an indication of his concern in the matter.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, the petitions were to be of no avail.

In January of 1642, two months before he removed himself to York, Charles had ordered the earl of Newcastle to take possession of the town of Hull and hold it in his name. The House of Commons, anticipating this move on the King's part, appointed Sir John Hotham as parliamentary governor of the town on 11 January, and by so doing prevented him from securing a military base.<sup>72</sup> The importance of Hull cannot be overestimated in these crucial months



before the actual fighting broke out. Refortified and stocked with all manner of weaponry and military supplies during the Scottish wars, Hull had become a veritable arsenal. Its coastal situation gave it excellent access to the sea, and the flat, marshy land which surrounded it made it practically impregnable from any attack from the landward approach. As the coming war would bear out, Hull was the key to all of Yorkshire, and without it the royalists could not lock up the county entirely. Although thwarted in his first attempt to take Hull, Charles was not resigned to leaving it in the hands of parliament, for he readily appreciated its strategic value.

In March, parliament enacted the Militia Ordinance, which appointed lords lieutenant for each county, answerable to the Houses of Lords and Commons. Charles immediately proclaimed a Commission of Array. In effect, this was almost the final rupture as it forced individuals either to choose sides or announce their neutrality, and consequently the Yorkshire gentry began to divide as loyalties were publicly declared. That the Fairfax family was committed to the side of parliament by this time is beyond any doubt, and the next few months revealed the extent of its involvement and the depth of its conviction, as both Ferdinando and Thomas figured prominently in the attempts to reason with the King.

In the meantime, the King tried once again to seize the initiative by sending another small force to Hull, but



again Hotham obstinately refused to surrender, During the following months of May and June events began to move rapidly. The King, using the hostility he had met at Hull as a pretext, assembled the Yorkshire gentry and addressed them at York.<sup>73</sup> He announced that he desired a personal bodyguard, and in spite of assurances from parliament, he began to gather the nucleus of an army.<sup>74</sup> The success of this scheme prompted Charles to further action. On 3 June he summoned the Yorkshire freeholders and copyholders to a meeting on Heworth Moor near York. This time he was not as successful, as it soon became evident that little support would be forthcoming.

As a member of the discontented group, and as a representative of the parliamentary faction, Thomas Fairfax was chosen, with others in attendance, to present the King with a petition which detailed the economic woes and other ills of the county. There is an apocryphal tale attached to this encounter, which is readily and persistently echoed by a number of modern historians, of how the King, mounted upon his charger, tried to ride Thomas down, but its foundation in fact seems to be quite suspect. A Yorkshire gentleman, an eyewitness of the scene, wrote to a friend in London shortly after the incident:

They requested Sir Thomas Fairfax Knight,<sup>75</sup> son to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, to present the same petition to his majesty; publicly declaring their approbation thereunto; which he...accepted of, and used his utmost endeavour to deliver the same, and



after extraordinary opposition, made his way through the horse, and came at last near to his majesty, and alighted, and tendered the same; who putting it aside with his hand, declined the acceptance thereof; and Sir Thomas Fairfax pressing the second time with more earnestness, received the like refusal, yet left the same upon the pommel of his majesty's saddle, and returned and acquainted the freeholders therewith; who being troubled at his majesty's refusal resolved to go into the city....76

It is also worth mentioning that John Rushworth, who later became secretary to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, and although not present at the meeting, reported a similar account -notable for its absence of flying hooves:

But his majesty well remembers, that on the third of June, when there was, upon his majesty's summons, the greatest and the most cheerful concourse of people that ever was beheld of one county, appearing before him at York, a gentleman (one Sir Thomas Fairfax) offered in that great confluence, a petition to his majesty; which his majesty seeing to be avowed by no man but himself, and the general and universal acclamations of the people seeming to disclaim it, did not receive, conceiving it not to be presented or received in that place....77

Thomas Fairfax certainly did not declare for parliament, as one modern historian has written, because of "an incident calculated to provoke the most sweet-tempered of knights."<sup>78</sup> The King had already made known his unwillingness to cooperate by his overt attempt upon Hull, and his thinly concealed scheme to gather an army in the guise of an escort. His refusal to accept the petition on Heworth Moor came as no surprise to the Yorkshire parliamentarians, for he had fouled his relations with them and aroused their resistance long before Thomas Fairfax approached him in person. The





King's exhibition of arrogance at the meeting merely added insult to a growing list of injuries, and revealed to all his opponents that he would not negotiate except upon his own terms, and these would not be discussed but simply dictated.

On 17 June, yet another petition was handed to the King at York by Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, Sir Hugh Cholmley and Sir Philip Stapleton, who represented a great number of the gentry and freeholders who had been present at Heworth Moor. Essentially, this petition was an attempt to urge the King to reconsider past events. The principal grievance of the petitioners was that the miseries and warfare of the preceding three years had been caused:

...by reason of your majesty's distance in residence, and difference in counsels from your Great Council, the parliament, begetting great distempers and distractions throughout the kingdom, and especially in the county of Yorkshire....79

However, by this time, Charles had become deaf to all entreaties, and encouraged by developments in London, he had resolved to assert with military force what he had been unable to achieve with diplomacy. The final and irreconcilable breach came with the Nineteen Propositions of 19 June 1642, which attempted to force Charles to submit totally to the revolutionary actions of parliament, and surrender many of the crown's most cherished rights and privileges. To Charles this was absolute anathema.

By July, Charles felt strong enough to take the offensive, and this time taking personal command, he led



his small army to the gates of Hull. In great part this venture was made necessary by news from London that parliament had begun to raise an army, and thus Charles hoped to gain the upper hand by taking Hull before parliament could take the field. Unluckily for Charles, Hotham remained as stubborn as ever, and steadfastly refused to surrender. Charles laid siege to the town, and consequently the first blood of the Civil War was shed here as Hotham's garrison shot down a few of the King's attackers. By flooding the neighbouring countryside, Hotham was able to break the siege, and Charles was forced to draw off to Beverley, which is a few miles to the north of Hull.<sup>80</sup>

Charles returned to York, where he spent the remainder of July and most of August consolidating his position. Almost without exception, the prominent inhabitants of the city of York were loyal to the crown, and Charles was confident that the county at large would for the most part remain at his side. With total lack of forethought, he made no provision for the resourcefulness and determination of the Fairfaxes and others like them, and seems to have completely ignored or forgotten, for the time being, his Achilles' heel - Hull. Also, he seriously weakened the existing strength of the Yorkshire royalists by taking his small army south with him. Towards the middle of August, Charles prepared to leave for Nottingham, where he had proclaimed he would assemble all his loyal subjects north of the river Trent. Before he left,



he appointed the earl of Cumberland Lieutenant-General of Yorkshire, and empowered him, amid popular acclaim, to execute the authority of the crown.<sup>81</sup>

On 22 August 1642, Charles unfurled his standard at Nottingham, and in effect, declared open warfare upon parliament. In Yorkshire, within a week of Charles's departure, the royalists, led by the earl of Cumberland, began to plan a campaign of violence against their opponents. Faced with this threat, and although heavily outnumbered, Ferdinando Lord Fairfax and Sir Thomas Fairfax roused their tenants and prepared for war.<sup>82</sup>





## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>E. Peacock, "On Some Civil War Documents relating to Yorkshire," The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal (1870), p.89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>DNB, vi, 999-1000. See article on John Fairfax of the Suffolk branch of the family.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Sir J.E. Neale, The Elizabethan House of Commons (London, 1963), p.81; also see HMC Hatfield, vii, 412-16, for an account of the election.

<sup>5</sup>J.J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII (London, 1971), p.33; also see DNB, vi, 1001-2, for article on Dr. Robert Fairfax.

<sup>6</sup>T. Fuller, The Worthies of England (London, 1840), iii, 414; also see DNB, vi, 997-98, for article on Sir Guy Fairfax.

<sup>7</sup>Peacock, "Civil War Documents," p.90; also see W.J. Connor, "The Fairfax Archives: A Study in Dispersal," Archives (1973), xi, 76.

<sup>8</sup>DNB, vi, 1004; Markham, p.4.

<sup>9</sup>H.G. Koenigsberger, The Habsburgs and Europe 1516-1660 (New York, 1971), p.203; DNB, vi, 994. See article on Sir Charles Fairfax which points out that it is very unlikely that he was killed at Ostend, but probably died at a later date, at the siege of Sluys.

<sup>10</sup>G.E. Cokayne, Complete Peerage (London, 1890), iii, 305; DNB, vi, 1004.

<sup>11</sup>J.T. Cliffe, The Yorkshire Gentry, From the Reformation to the Civil War (London, 1969), p.248.

<sup>12</sup>DNB, vi, 1004-5. See article on Thomas 1st Lord Fairfax.

<sup>13</sup>"Parliamentary Representation of the County of York 1258-1832," ed., A. Gooder, The Yorkshire Archaeological Society (Wakefield, 1938), ii, 38; also see DNB, vi, 1004.

<sup>14</sup>"Parliamentary Representation," ii, 38.



- <sup>15</sup>Cliffe, p.111.
- <sup>16</sup>J. Rushworth, Historical Collections (London, 1659), I, 151.
- <sup>17</sup>DNB, vi, 1004.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., 994-95. See article on Charles Fairfax.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., 998. See article on Henry Fairfax.
- <sup>20</sup>Cokayne, iii, 305; DNB, vi, 996-97. See article on Ferdinando 2nd Lord Fairfax.
- <sup>21</sup>Markham, p.12. Ferdinando Fairfax's father, Thomas 1st Lord Fairfax, once said of him, "I sent him into the Netherlands to train him up as a soldier, and he makes a tolerable country justice, but is a mere coward at fighting." Of course, the old lord did not live to see his son "redeem" himself in the Civil War.
- <sup>22</sup>Cokayne, iii, 305.
- <sup>23</sup>DNB, vi, 1005-13. See article on Thomas 3rd Lord Fairfax.
- <sup>24</sup>"The Parish Register of Otley, County York, Part I, 1562-1672," The Yorkshire Parish Register Society (Leeds, 1908), p.36.
- <sup>25</sup>Fairfax, p.396.
- <sup>26</sup>G. Ridsdill-Smith, Without Touch of Dishonour: The Life and Death of Sir Henry Slingsby 1602-1658 (Kineton, Warwickshire, 1968), p.31.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup>Cliffe, p.79.
- <sup>29</sup>FC Charles I, i, 161; also see P. Geyl, The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century, Part I, 1609-1648 (London, 1961), p.88, for an account of the siege of Hertogensbosch. Also see Acts of the Privy Council, July 1628-April 1629, p.371, for details of a pass given to Thomas Fairfax and John Hotham "to pass the seas into the Low Countries."
- <sup>30</sup>FC Charles I, i, 161. Thomas Fairfax to Thomas Lord Fairfax, 12 May 1629.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., 163. Thomas Fairfax to Thomas Lord Fairfax, 22 February 1632.



<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Cliffe, p.79.

<sup>34</sup>FC Charles I, i, 163. Thomas Fairfax to Thomas Lord Fairfax, 22 February 1632.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 301. Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Fairfax, 6 February 1636.

<sup>37</sup>Cokayne, iii, 306.

<sup>38</sup>FC Charles I, i, 306. Thomas Fairfax to Thomas Lord Fairfax, 29 June 1637.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 338. Thomas Fairfax to Thomas Lord Fairfax, 24 July 1637.

<sup>40</sup>DNB, vi, 1005.

<sup>41</sup>CSP Dom., 1637-38, p.433; Cliffe, p.239. Cliffe quotes an excerpt from Thomas Lord Fairfax's letter to Ferdinando Fairfax.

<sup>42</sup>See "Parliamentary Representation," ii, 51, for a list of all occasions on which Ferdinando Fairfax sat as a member of parliament.

<sup>43</sup>M. Ashley, Cromwell's Generals (London, 1954), p.16; Markham, pp.21-23.

<sup>44</sup>R. Mitchison, A History of Scotland (London, 1970), p.192.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.195.

<sup>46</sup>Cliffe, p.310.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp.314-15.

<sup>48</sup>FC Charles I, i, 355-56. Thomas Fairfax to Thomas Lord Fairfax, 6 May 1639.

<sup>49</sup>For details of the Treaty of Berwick, see Mitchison, p.204; and D. Stevenson, The Scottish Revolution 1637-1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters (London, 1973), pp.155-57.

<sup>50</sup>FC Charles I, i, 386. Thomas Fairfax to Lady Vere, undated, 1639.

<sup>51</sup>"Parliamentary Representation," ii, 51.



<sup>52</sup>Cokayne, iii, 305.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>CSP Dom., 1640-41, p.337.

<sup>55</sup>Cliffe, p.318.

<sup>56</sup>See CSP Dom., 1640-41, p.62, for an entry dealing with the raising of Ferdinando Fairfax's volunteers; and CSP Dom., 1640, pp.147, 242 and 515 respectively for Thomas Fairfax's letters to Edward Viscount Conway, 11 and 29 May 1640, and Commissary-General Henry Wilmot's letter of 8 July 1640.

<sup>57</sup>For details of the Treaty of Ripon, see Stevenson, pp.210-13; and also J.P. Kenyon, The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688, Documents and Commentary (Cambridge, 1969), p.189.

<sup>58</sup>"Parliamentary Representation," ii, 51. It should be explained that Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, as a member of the Scottish peerage, was unable to sit in the English House of Lords, but was eligible for election to the House of Commons.

<sup>59</sup>See Ibid., 46, for a list of all occasions on which Henry Bellasis sat as a member of parliament.

<sup>60</sup>CSP Dom., 1640-41, p.158. See entry for Ferdinando Fairfax's election as a Knight of the Shire; also see J.H. Gleason, Justices of the Peace in England 1558-1640 (Oxford, 1969), p.239. Gleason remarks that Ferdinando Fairfax resented and openly opposed Thomas Wentworth.

<sup>61</sup>Cliffe, pp.297-99. Cliffe gives an account of the conflict between Thomas Wentworth and Thomas Lord Fauconberg.

<sup>62</sup>See Ibid., p.299, for details of how Wentworth's suspicions seem to have been aroused by Ferdinando Fairfax's close association with Henry Bellasis.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p.327.

<sup>65</sup>Edward, earl of Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, ed., W.D. Macray, (Oxford, 1888), i, 225.

<sup>66</sup>Cliffe, p.327. Cliffe quotes an excerpt from Ferdinando Fairfax's letter to Henry Fairfax.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p.336. Cliffe estimates that in 1642 no less than 242 families declared for the King as opposed to only





128 for parliament. Approximately 240 remained neutral, and another 69 either changed sides during the war or were deeply divided in their loyalties.

<sup>68</sup>A. Woolrych, "Yorkshire's Treaty of Neutrality," History Today (October 1956), vi, 696.

<sup>69</sup>Cliffe, p.332.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p.330.

<sup>71</sup>Woolrych, "Yorkshire's Neutrality," p.696; also see Cliffe, pp.329-30.

<sup>72</sup>Victoria County History: Yorkshire, A History of the County of York: East Riding (London, 1969), i, 102. Also see E. Broxap, "The Sieges of Hull during the Great Civil War," English Historical Review (1905), xx, 459-60, for the details of Sir John Hotham's appointment as the governor of Hull on 11 January 1642.

<sup>73</sup>FC Civil War, i, 12.

<sup>74</sup>CSP Dom., 1641-43, pp.323-24; also see Cliffe, p.332.

<sup>75</sup>Thomas Fairfax was knighted by Charles I, at York, on 28 January 1641. For details, see W.A. Shaw, The Knights of England (Baltimore, 1971), ii, 208.

<sup>76</sup>Quoted in Sir G. Duckett, "Civil War Proceedings in Yorkshire," The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal (1882), pp.65-66.

<sup>77</sup>Rushworth, III, i, 632.

<sup>78</sup>Ashley, Generals, p.17.

<sup>79</sup>Rushworth, III, i, 630.

<sup>80</sup>Broxap, "The Sieges of Hull," pp.461-66.

<sup>81</sup>Woolrych, "Yorkshire's Neutrality," p.699.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE YORKSHIRE WARS TO THE BATTLE OF MARSTON MOOR (1642-1644)

The services I have received from you have been so eminent, and are likely to have so great an influence upon all my affairs, that I need tell you that I shall never forget them, but always look upon you as a principal instrument in keeping the crown upon my head. The business of Yorkshire I account almost done.

Charles I to the earl of Newcastle

Although the Civil War broke out in August of 1642, there was no actual fighting until two months later, except for a few isolated incidents of individuals attacking each other. Many of the leading persons in Yorkshire, on both the parliamentary and royalist sides, were hesitant and reluctant to enter the conflict, and were content to wait upon events. As in many other counties, the gentry of Yorkshire sought a way to keep their county out of the war. The acknowledged leaders of the opposing parties met and discussed the possibility of creating a treaty of neutrality,



SCARBOROUGH

RIPON

STAMFORD  
BRIDGE

July 1644  
MARSTON  
MOOR

YORK July 1644

DENTON

OTLEY

Nov. 1642  
WETHERBY

R. WHARFE

Mar. 1643  
SEACROFT  
MOOR

TADCASTER

R. OUSE

Jan. 1643  
LEEDS

June 1643  
BRADFORD

June 1643  
ADWALTON  
MOOR

R. AIRE

Dec. 1642  
SHERBURN

SELEY

R. OUSE

PONTEFRAC

May 1643 &  
WAKEFIELD

Aug. / Oct. 1643  
HULL

R. HUMBER

Oct. 1643  
BEVERLEY

# THE WAR IN YORKSHIRE 1642-1644

LEGEND: ♂ BATTLES AND ASSAULTS  
⊙ SIEGES



whereby bloodshed would be avoided and some form of amicable settlement agreed upon. Throughout the tension-filled months of August and September, Ferdinando Fairfax met with Henry Bellasis, formerly his companion as knight of the shire for Yorkshire in the Parliament of late 1640. Although now on opposite sides, both Fairfax and Bellasis were equally desirous of reaching a compromise.

By the end of September the meetings had ended successfully, and a treaty of neutrality was declared in which both parties revealed their intention to spare their county the ravages of war.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, parliament announced that the agreement was an overt usurpation of its authority, and immediately repudiated the treaty on 29 September.<sup>2</sup> Once the treaty had been quashed, Thomas Fairfax and his father quickly turned their energy toward preparing for the fighting soon to come. Clarendon later remarked, perhaps with some justice that:

...the Lord Fairfax himself, and all the gentlemen of that party who had with that protestation signed the articles, instead of resenting the reproach to themselves, tamely submitted to those unreasonable conclusions, and, contrary to their solemn promise and engagement, prepared themselves to bear a part in the war, and made all haste to levy men....<sup>3</sup>

However, it seems reasonable to assume that the Fairfaxes, once they realised that their attempt to avoid the war had failed, were keenly aware that the time factor was extremely important if they were to be ready to face an enemy that greatly outnumbered them in the field.





Now that bloodshed was unavoidable and imminent, the parliamentary gentry of Yorkshire looked to Ferdinando Fairfax, who had been elected their leader in August 1642, to take up the responsibilities of command. Thomas Fairfax wrote in his memoirs that his father, "being much importuned by those that were about him; he was resolved, seeing his county in this great distress, to run the same hazard with them for the preservation of it."<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the fact that Ferdinando Fairfax had been appointed General of the Forces in the North, it was obvious to all that Thomas Fairfax, who had considerably more military experience, and was now commissioned as General of the Horse, was the most able commander on the parliamentary side. He began to recruit and drill soldiers in the West Riding. Together with the tenants from the Fairfax estates, many men from the clothing towns of Leeds, Halifax, Huddersfield, Bradford and Wakefield flocked to his side, because they saw a parliamentary victory as a solution to the economic depression that had been caused by the King's Scottish wars.

By 10 October 1642, Thomas Fairfax, with about 300 men, had stationed himself at Bradford, while his father made his headquarters near Leeds. The royalists held York and the surrounding area, and the parliamentarians held Hull and Scarborough. The parliamentary line of defense ran due west from Hull to Bradford, and in effect divided northern



and southern Yorkshire. The earl of Newcastle, who now replaced the earl of Cumberland as the King's commander in the north, occupied the port of Newcastle, in Northumberland, and thus gave the royalists access to the sea.

During these early days of the Civil War, it seems that nobody really knew what to do, and that each side waited for the other to make a move. On the other hand, perhaps Thomas Fairfax, ruled by his experience, and conscious of his meagre forces, simply waited for the royalists to take the initiative. It appears that the latter was the case, for on 13 October a royalist force of between 700 and 800 men, under the command of Sir Thomas Glemham, attacked Thomas Fairfax at Bradford, ostensibly for no other reason than to test parliamentary strength. Although greatly outnumbered, Fairfax managed to beat them off, but finding his position at Bradford untenable, because of his inability to defend it adequately, he moved his forces out and joined his father at Leeds.<sup>5</sup>

After the skirmish at Bradford, the strategy of the parliamentarians in Yorkshire appears to be much clearer. The Fairfaxes were obligated to their supporters in the West Riding, and consequently they decided to defend the clothing towns by securing the line of the river Wharfe. This action would also create a buffer against the royalist concentration around York. In November, the Fairfaxes advanced from Leeds and moved north-east. Thomas Fairfax occupied Wetherby, a



town only eight miles from the royalists at York, and as he remarked, with "friends enough to direct and acquaint them with all we did."<sup>6</sup> In the meantime his father entered Tadcaster and waited to see what action the royalists would take.

The blow was not long in coming. Within days of Thomas Fairfax's arrival in Wetherby, a royalist force of about 800 cavalry, again under the command of Glemham, attacked his small troop of 300 men. The sentries were asleep, for as Fairfax wrote in his memoirs: "in the beginning of the war, men were as impatient of duty as ignorant of it."<sup>7</sup> Glemham's troops stormed the town at first light, and for a time it appeared that all was lost for the parliamentarians. Perhaps Fairfax would have been defeated if providence had not come to his assistance. After a brief period of hand-to-hand fighting, a stray bullet struck the parliamentary magazine. The ensuing explosion terrified Glemham's troops who, fearing that Fairfax had cannon, turned and fled for their lives. Exhilarated by this turn of events, the few dragoons that Fairfax possessed immediately gave chase to the fleeing royalists and captured many of them. The parliamentarians lost only ten men, and seven of these perished in the explosion of the ammunition. Once again, Thomas Fairfax had beaten off an attack when vastly outnumbered. However, on this occasion, he freely admitted that the victory was not of his doing, and wrote of it later, "I must confess I know of



no strength, but the powerful hand of God, that gave them this repulse."<sup>8</sup>

Despite these initial successes, the Fairfaxes were in a precarious position. The earl of Newcastle, exasperated by the failure of his subordinates to crush the smaller parliamentary forces, decided to take action himself. He left Newcastle and marched to York with 8,000 men. Fearful of the safety of his position at Tadcaster, Ferdinando Fairfax called all of his forces together, so as to be ready to face an attack. Thomas Fairfax left Wetherby and marched to join his father,<sup>9</sup> while Sir John Hotham's son advanced on Tadcaster from the east with a few hastily levied recruits from Hull. A council of war was held, at which Thomas Fairfax quite probably had a lot to say, as he had faced the initial royalist attacks and was well aware of their numerical superiority. It is also very likely that the decision made to evacuate Tadcaster was first suggested by him. The Fairfaxes, combined with Hotham's troops, had a meagre 800 men, while Newcastle, even after providing for garrisons, still had a force of over 4,000.<sup>10</sup>

However, on 7 December 1642, while preparations were being made to leave Tadcaster, Newcastle's army suddenly appeared on the scene. As it was too late to retreat, the Fairfaxes stood and gave battle. The royalists suffered heavy losses. They were thwarted in an attempt to cross the bridge over the river Wharfe, and only the continual





pounding of Newcastle's cannon had any serious effect on the parliamentary army. By nightfall, Newcastle was forced to draw off, and this gave the Fairfaxes a chance to withdraw.

Thomas Fairfax later explained in his memoirs that, in spite of their success during the day, a chronic lack of ammunition forced them to leave the town.<sup>11</sup> The Fairfaxes now retreated south-east towards Selby, from where they would have easier access to supplies at Hull.<sup>12</sup> Their situation was still desperate, and money and ammunition were in short supply. A traveller in the area wrote to Sir John Coke in London, and told him that, "My Lord Fairfax writes to the parliament for 20,000l. to maintain this war there; if not he must give it over."<sup>13</sup> On 8 December Newcastle entered Tadcaster and jubilantly celebrated his pyrrhic victory.

Both the Fairfaxes are to be commended for their actions in this early stage of the war. With his great numerical superiority, Newcastle should have been able to defeat the Fairfaxes easily. One can only surmise that their military experience and refusal to expose their little army to a pitched battle compensated for their lack of numbers, and certainly preserved them from annihilation. What should have been a simple task for Newcastle, had now become a major threat to his security in the north. Perhaps his only consolation was that in saving their army, the



Fairfaxes had been forced to expose the clothing towns of the West Riding, the source of their greatest support, to the danger of royalist attack.

With the Fairfaxes restricted to the immediate vicinity of Selby, Newcastle began his occupation of the West Riding. After garrisoning the villages around Tadcaster, he sent a force, under Sir William Savile, scion of a prominent Yorkshire family, to occupy the cloth towns. Leeds and Wakefield fell quickly, but Bradford put up resistance.<sup>14</sup> The plight of the West Riding towns was ever present in the minds of the Fairfaxes, and thus Thomas Fairfax made an unsuccessful attempt to go to their relief on 14 December. Due to the strength of the royalists in his path, he was forced to turn back, but took the opportunity to attack the garrison of royalists at Sherburn on his return journey.

Four days later, on 18 December, news reached Selby that Bradford was in extreme danger of falling, as Savile attacked it repeatedly. With his father's permission, Thomas Fairfax set out once again to go to its relief. By the use of speed and night marches, he was able to evade royalist troops and eventually reached Bradford, a town which he described as "very untenable, but for their good affections, deserving all we could hazard for them."<sup>15</sup>

Thomas Fairfax's arrival in Bradford was the signal for a renewal of the sagging determination of its defenders.



In addition, on 22 December, the House of Commons voted that 20,000l. be sent to Ferdinando Fairfax,<sup>16</sup> and shortly afterwards, he sent a few reinforcements and arms from Selby. This unexpected increase in the parliamentary force was something that Savile had not counted on, and thus he broke the siege and fell back on Leeds. Savile continued to send out strong troops of horse until, as Thomas Fairfax remarked, "our few men grew so bold, and theirs so disheartened, as they dare not stir a mile out of their garrison."<sup>17</sup>

Already, in this early part of the Civil War, the name "fiery Tom" was becoming a byword among the parliamentary troops. Fairfax's mere presence among his men seemed to spur them on and fill them with a confidence that defied their lack of numbers. With the siege broken and morale at a high level, Fairfax now decided to take the initiative. He gathered a force of 1,300 men, which he considered to be "too many to lie idle, and yet too few to be in continual duty,"<sup>18</sup> and planned to attack Leeds itself.

At first glance, and especially when one considers the few troops at his disposal, the scheme seems utterly mad, but perhaps Fairfax reasoned that by creating trouble for Savile he would force Newcastle to send reinforcements, and consequently relieve the pressure on his father at Selby.

The venture proved successful beyond all expectations and, needless to say, was attributable to the



superior military skill of Thomas Fairfax. On 23 January 1643, Fairfax drew up his forces before Leeds. Savile, who had a few hundred more men than his attacker, refused to surrender. During a blinding snowstorm, which aided rather than hindered the parliamentarians, Fairfax attacked and took the town by assault. Those of the defenders who were able to escape, fled to the safety of the earl of Newcastle. Fairfax, greatly pleased with the result of the fight, wrote in his memoirs that:

The consequence of this action was yet of more importance. For those that fled from Leeds and Wakefield, (for they also quitted that garrison) gave my Lord Newcastle such an alarm at Pontefract, where he lay; that he drew all his army back again to York; leaving once more a free intercourse between my father and me, which he had so long time cut off....<sup>19</sup>

Immediately on hearing news of his son's victory, Ferdinando Fairfax wrote two letters to the House of Commons, in which he outlined the confusion that the royalists had been thrown into. The House of Commons ordered that thanks be given throughout all of England, and that the Fairfaxes be praised for their efforts in keeping the parliamentary cause alive in Yorkshire.<sup>20</sup> The loss of Leeds was a serious setback for Newcastle. He was now suffering the consequences of his failure to catch and completely crush the Fairfaxes at Tadcaster.

In spite of the success of the attack on Leeds, and the disorder which prevailed among the royalists, the parliamentary position was far from secure. It is true that





the Fairfaxes held Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield and Selby, and parliamentary forces continued to hold Hull and Scarborough. However, apart from the arsenal at Hull, the Fairfaxes had no other source of military supplies. Both Thomas Fairfax and his father were short of money, ammunition, clothing, weapons, and above all men.

Fortunately, each military success offered an opportunity of supplying the army with captured weapons and ammunition, but as financial support from London was often tardy in arriving, the Fairfaxes had to dip constantly into their own pockets to provide for their troops. Even then, it was impossible for the Fairfaxes to match the financial resources of Newcastle, who had been elevated to command not for any observable military talents, as evidenced by his inability to control all of Yorkshire for the royalists, but for his apparently boundless wealth.

After the capture of Leeds, Thomas Fairfax returned to Selby to rejoin his father. His arrival was timely, as Ferdinando Fairfax was now faced with additional problems. Sir Hugh Cholmley, a reluctant parliamentarian from the first, betrayed his allies and delivered the port of Scarborough to the royalists.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to this setback, relations between Sir John Hotham and Ferdinando Fairfax had become more strained. Despite the command of the House of Commons that his powers were restricted to the governorship of Hull, Hotham still



considered himself an equal to and not a subordinate of Ferdinando Fairfax.<sup>22</sup> Prompted by little more than jealousy of his superior, he refused to cooperate and halted all flow of supplies from Hull. Cut off from their most important source of muskets and swords, the Fairfaxes decided that they must fall back on their original area of military support.

A plan was devised by which Ferdinando Fairfax would evacuate Selby, and the surrounding villages, and retreat to Leeds. To cover his right flank, Thomas Fairfax was to make a diversionary attack on Tadcaster. Hopefully, this would confuse the royalists and allow his father to escape unmolested with the bulk of the army.

At the end of March 1643, Ferdinando Fairfax left for Leeds with 1,500 men. Thomas Fairfax, having only a small number of horse and a few hundred infantry, moved north-west towards Tadcaster, and succeeded in drawing the bulk of Newcastle's forces toward him. He attacked Tadcaster and put the garrison to flight. The fleeing royalists spread the news that the parliamentarians were making an attempt upon York, and thus Newcastle sent Colonel George Goring out, with twenty troops of horse, to intercept the attack.

Goring, the eldest son of the earl of Norwich, was a cavalry commander of considerable ability, who had gained much experience in the continental wars. This was the first of many actions that he fought against Thomas Fairfax in the



## Civil War.

The disaster which followed can be blamed upon Thomas Fairfax. In his eagerness to hurt the royalists by every means possible, he spent too much time destroying the fortifications of Tadcaster. Consequently, Goring's cavalry appeared on the scene just as Fairfax's troops were leaving the town. Underestimating the speed at which the royalists would react to the situation was to cost Fairfax dearly on this occasion. He began a rapid march upon Leeds, but due to the slowness of the infantry Goring caught him easily about six miles south-west of Tadcaster. The fight which followed, on 29 March 1643, at Seacroft Moor, was the first serious defeat that Thomas Fairfax suffered. Goring annihilated the parliamentary infantry, and Fairfax was only able to extricate a few of his cavalrymen. He acknowledged in his memoirs that this:

...was one of the greatest losses we ever received. Yet it was a great Providence that it was a part, and not the whole force which received this loss: it being the enemy's intention to have fought us that day with their whole army, which was, at least, 10,000 men; had not the attempt at Tadcaster put a stand to them. And so concluded that day with this storm that fell on us....23

In spite of his serious losses, Thomas Fairfax had achieved his primary objective. Ferdinando Fairfax's army arrived unhindered at Leeds, and was soon joined by the remnants of his son's cavalry. The royalists, although they had won a minor victory, had missed an opportunity to crush



the parliamentary field force, and therefore continued to face the threat of an enemy with an effective fighting strength. Consequently, Newcastle could not realise his intention of descending upon Hull until the Fairfaxes had been brought to a pitched battle and defeated decisively.

The refusal of the Fairfaxes to give in, at this stage, affected the outcome of the entire Civil War. The royalists, notwithstanding their accomplishments in the west country and the midlands, could not mount a three-prong attack on London until all of Yorkshire had been secured. The persistence of the Fairfaxes was the deciding factor in preventing the royalists from achieving this object. Had the Fairfaxes surrendered, it is quite possible that the King would have advanced, taken London, and finished the Civil War by the end of 1643.

However, generally speaking, the situation that the Fairfaxes faced in April of 1643 seemed almost hopeless. One modern historian has pointed out that although Thomas Fairfax's ability to hold his own had "showed what could be done against superior numbers...the odds were too long for his success to last."<sup>24</sup> Strategically, the Fairfaxes held only Bradford and Leeds, while the rest of Yorkshire, excepting the port of Hull, was under royalist control.<sup>25</sup> Newcastle's forces outnumbered them almost ten to one, and were also far better fed and equipped. A chronic shortage of money prompted Ferdinando Fairfax to write to London, once





again, to request financial aid,<sup>26</sup> but despite the efforts of the House of Commons, the Fairfaxes were compelled, more and more, to fall back upon their own resources. The future certainly looked bleak in the spring of 1643, and was indeed about to become much bleaker but, before the "odds" became too long, Thomas Fairfax was afforded another opportunity to demonstrate his ability.

After the defeat at Seacroft Moor, the wives and families of the parliamentary prisoners had begged Thomas Fairfax to secure their release. (A common feature of the Civil War was that prisoners were frequently exchanged when the opportunity arose. Aristocrats and senior commanders, of course, were dealt with on a quid pro quo basis.) Having no prisoners of his own, Fairfax decided that the best solution was simply to go out and get some. He planned to attack Wakefield which, according to the reports of his spies, was garrisoned by only 800 or 900 men.

However, when Fairfax arrived there, he found that the royalists had a force of over 3,000 men, which was three times the strength of the parliamentary army.<sup>27</sup> Disregarding his lack of numbers, Fairfax raced his cavalry through the town and threw the royalists into utter confusion. The resulting rout provided him with the necessary prisoners, and he must also have experienced immense personal satisfaction when Colonel Goring, who but six weeks earlier had dealt him such a blow at Seacroft Moor, was found among them. The



traveller and writer, William Lithgow, perhaps an eyewitness, wrote an account of the action at Wakefield in which he said that:

...the most remarkable of all, was that prevalent victory, May 20th, which the Lord Fairfax's son obtained at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, against Colonel Goring and his forces...where Fairfax put to flight and routed the whole brigade, taking Colonel Goring prisoner, with twenty five prime officers, and fifteen hundred common soldiers; so that none escaped save some few horse troops, and a few of them slain; for the which auspicious happiness, there was solemn thanks given to God through all the churches in London, May 28th, being Sunday; and this grateful celebration was ordered by the parliament to be done....<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the capture of Wakefield yielded a large supply of weapons and ammunition.<sup>29</sup> However, even this wind-fall was not enough to supplement the Fairfaxes' fastly diminishing stores. Without even considering the occupation of the town, Fairfax rapidly left and returned to Leeds with his loot.

Three days after the battle, Ferdinando Fairfax wrote to Speaker William Lenthall and warned him of the great danger that faced his forces in the north:

I desire our condition may be seriously thought on by the House, and the aids often promised, may presently march away to us...I may be able to draw this army into the field, and gain fresh quarter for the soldiers, and furnish ourselves with powder, arms and ammunition, which is now grown very scarce, and cannot be supplied, until the passage to Hull be forced open, which is now possessed by the enemy...we cannot long subsist, but must be forced to accept of dishonourable conditions, which besides the loss and ruin of this county, will be a great disadvantage to the general safety....<sup>30</sup>



Ferdinando Fairfax was certainly correct in his estimation of the situation in Yorkshire. Although the parliamentarians had achieved some astounding victories, it was evident that disaster continued to stare them in the face. As the Fairfaxes were blocked up in Leeds and Bradford, Newcastle was now able to concentrate all of his forces on those two towns, and prepared to shatter their resistance once and for all. The royalist army, as Ferdinando Fairfax observed in his letter, had also occupied the escape route to Hull, and even if this could be forced, it was possible that Hotham would not allow the Fairfaxes to enter the town.<sup>31</sup> Newcastle spent the month of June 1643 capturing the villages and fortified houses around Leeds and Bradford, so as to sever any possibility of assistance for the parliamentarians. At the end of the month, the royalist army appeared before Bradford, and as Thomas Fairfax wrote later, "again it pleased God to mix water with our wine."<sup>32</sup>

The battle of Adwalton Moor, on 30 June 1643, all but ended the parliamentary cause in Yorkshire. Newcastle drew up his army four miles to the south-east of Bradford, and waited for the Fairfaxes either to come out or prepare for siege.

The decision of the Fairfaxes to give battle seems quite puzzling, when one considers that Newcastle had an army of over 10,000 men, whereas they had only 3,000 trained soldiers, and an assortment of town and countryfolk armed with scythes and pitchforks. Moreover, Thomas Fairfax reveals



a certain bitterness in his writings on this action, and remarks that the royalists found "us almost tired, with continual services; treacherously used by our friends [presumably the Hothams] and in want of many things necessary for support and defence."<sup>33</sup>

The very hopelessness of the situation may have aroused the will to resist. Certainly, inferiority of numbers had never deterred the Fairfaxes in the past and, as Markham has written, they "never counted odds, and often commanded success by the skilful audacity of their movements. On this occasion, however, fortune was against them."<sup>34</sup> Another reason seems to be that Bradford contained provisions for only ten to twelve days,<sup>35</sup> and in addition, it is well to remember that Thomas Fairfax had found the town "untenable" once before, and had abandoned it.

Although the Fairfaxes were severely defeated at Adwalton Moor, and consequently ceased to exist as a fighting force, it appeared for a time that they would win. The royalist horse charged on both left and right wings, but were repulsed with heavy losses. In fact, this initial setback convinced the inept Newcastle that he had lost, and he actually gave the order to retreat.<sup>36</sup> Fortunately for the royalists, a furious charge, led by a royalist colonel of horse named Skirton, who Thomas Fairfax describes as "a wild and desperate man,"<sup>37</sup> turned the parliamentary left wing and caused Ferdinando Fairfax, who was commanding the centre, to





flee to Bradford. Owing to the lie of the land, Thomas Fairfax's view of the left side of the battlefield was obscured. He faced repeated charges of the greater part of the royalist horse, not knowing that two-thirds of the parliamentary army was in full flight. Eventually a messenger arrived with news of the collapse, and only then did Fairfax begin to retreat with the remnants of his horse and infantry. Evading the royalist troops by marching through Halifax, he was able to join with the remainder of his father's troops at Bradford. He began preparations to defend the town,<sup>38</sup> and in the meantime, Ferdinando Fairfax continued on to Leeds in order to secure it before the royalists descended upon it.

The parliamentary army had lost about a third of its fighting strength, and had absolutely no source of reinforcement at all. This was definitely the nadir of the parliamentary cause in Yorkshire, and Thomas Fairfax clearly expressed his despondency in his memoirs. "This business," he wrote, "having such ill success, our hopes of better could not be much: wanting all things that were necessary for defence, and no expectation of help from any place."<sup>39</sup>

Immediately after his triumph at Adwalton Moor, Newcastle advanced upon Bradford, and taking advantage of the hills that fringed the town, proceeded to batter the defenses with his cannon. Thomas Fairfax, realising that it was suicidal to remain there, broke through the royalist lines with his horse, but only after having completely



exhausted his ammunition. The entire parliamentary foot was either killed or captured. Fairfax, alone and unarmed, and after numerous hair-raising adventures and narrow escapes, arrived at Leeds.<sup>40</sup> However, Fairfax's delaying tactics and attempt at resistance at Bradford had given his father time to collect the stragglers from Adwalton Moor at Leeds. Yet, for all intents and purposes it seemed, to any intelligent observer, that the parliamentary cause had come to an abrupt and miserable end. Fairfax noted in his memoirs that in Leeds he found "all in great distraction."<sup>41</sup>

A council of war was immediately held. What was discussed, and what Ferdinando Fairfax's intentions were, we do not know. It would seem likely, perhaps, that the Fairfaxes would have attempted to force an entry into Hull: failing that, flight would appear to be their only other recourse.

However, while the remaining parliamentary commanders discussed their future, astounding news reached them. On 29 June, the day before the disaster at Adwalton Moor, the citizens of Hull had risen and seized the Hothams, who had openly declared for the King, and now offered the town to Ferdinando Fairfax.<sup>42</sup>

Losing no time, for Thomas Fairfax wrote that they left Leeds within two hours of the messenger's arrival,<sup>43</sup> the remnants of the Fairfaxes' army marched east towards Hull, a distance of about sixty miles. At Selby, part of the



parliamentary army collided with a large number of royalist horse that had been sent on ahead by Newcastle to hinder the Fairfaxes' progress. Outnumbered as usual, Thomas Fairfax attacked the royalists and beat them off. In the fight, he was shot in the wrist, but continued to delay the enemy until his father had ferried his infantry across the river Ouse and resumed his march on Hull. After being chased by royalist horse for two days, Fairfax eventually reached the river Humber, and accompanied by a small number of dragoons, crossed over into Hull, the last parliamentary possession in Yorkshire.<sup>44</sup>

At this point, Newcastle made the greatest mistake in his attempt at a military career. Instead of immediately besieging Hull, he continued on into Lincolnshire, confident that the Fairfaxes had ceased to be a threat. He left a garrison at York and a few detachments at smaller towns.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, and despite their predicament, the Fairfaxes were not without resource. By taking possession of Hull, they now had a large store of ammunition, weapons and clothing. They were protected by the walls of the strongest fortress in the kingdom, and could be easily supplied, as their position, as the Venetian ambassador noted, was "bathed by the sea."<sup>46</sup>

The first concern of the Fairfaxes was to gather a new army. Stragglers kept coming in from the countryside and many of the citizens of the town volunteered to serve. Soon



the parliamentary army had grown to a strength of 1,500 infantry and 700 horse, but so as to relieve the strain on Hull, Thomas Fairfax took a part of the force and quartered them at Beverley, a town a little to the north of Hull.<sup>47</sup>

Finding that the parliamentary forces were an equal match to the royalist troops that remained in Yorkshire, and determined to confound Newcastle's plan of marching into Essex and blocking up the eastern approach to London, Thomas Fairfax began to make sorties out of Beverley. On one occasion, he went as far as Stamford Bridge, and chased the garrison into nearby York. These raids achieved their purpose, for at the end of August 1643, Newcastle returned to Hull with an army of 16,000 men.<sup>48</sup>

Had the Fairfaxes not forced Newcastle to turn his attention towards them again, the consequences might have been disastrous to the parliamentary cause. The addition of 16,000 men to the existing royalist forces in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire might well have sealed the fate of the army of the Eastern Association, despite the recent successes of the earl of Manchester and his cavalry commander, Oliver Cromwell.

Thomas Fairfax devotes no more than two or three paragraphs of his memoirs to the siege of Hull, perhaps for the reason that he was not there for the greater part of the siege. However, Ferdinando Fairfax, who had been appointed Governor of Hull on 22 July at the request of





the Mayor of Hull, Thomas Raikes,<sup>49</sup> was quite adequately prepared to resist his attackers. He flooded the countryside for two miles around Hull, thus keeping the besiegers at a great distance and restricted mainly to the use of their cannon. Newcastle made several attempts to storm the town, but was easily repulsed. Thomas Fairfax wrote that, all else failing, the royalists resorted to firing at the town with incendiaries, or what he calls "fiery bullets," but the "diligence and care of the Governor (who caused every inhabitant to watch his own house, and wheresoever they saw these bullets fall, to be ready to quench them) prevented the danger."<sup>50</sup>

Unable to take the town by assault or fire, Newcastle could only wait. After two months of siege, Ferdinando Fairfax eventually rallied his troops and led a surprise attack on the royalist camp on 11 October. In spite of their numerical superiority, the royalists, who had suffered all manner of privation in their marshy quarters, broke and ran. Dispirited and mortified, Newcastle retreated to York. During the march he vented his anger on the town of Beverley, which he attacked and pillaged.

On 27 October, Charles I created Newcastle a marquis as a reward for his victory at Adwalton Moor.<sup>51</sup> It is ironic that this honour coincided with his great setback at Hull. The efforts of Ferdinando Fairfax did not go unrewarded either. Speaker Lenthall wrote to him from London and thanked



him for his services to the cause.<sup>52</sup> Undoubtedly, Fairfax would rather have had money to pay his men than thanks from the House of Commons.

While his father had been thwarting Newcastle before the walls of Hull, Thomas Fairfax had been striking blows for parliament elsewhere. At the approach of Newcastle's army, Fairfax had abandoned Beverley and fought a rearguard action with his horse while his infantry escaped. Once they were safe, he rejoined his father and assisted him in the defense of Hull. By the end of September, it was decided that the cavalry had to be evacuated, for the horses were dying by the dozen as there was "nothing but salt water about the town."<sup>53</sup> Consequently, Thomas Fairfax, leaving by night, evaded the royalist scouts and crossed the river Humber into Lincolnshire. Here he joined his forces with those of the Eastern Association under the earl of Manchester, and met for the first time, Oliver Cromwell. As one modern historian has described the meeting: "It was the beginning of a great partnership."<sup>54</sup> It would continue for another seven years.

Together, Fairfax and Cromwell met the royalist cavalry of the midlands at Winceby. The battle, fought on the same day that Ferdinando Fairfax fell upon Newcastle at Hull, was a resounding victory for the parliamentarians. Although they were outnumbered two to one,<sup>55</sup> the parliamentary horse completely shattered the royalist forces and put them to flight. On a single day, 11 October 1643, the royalists had



suffered two devastating reverses, and both had been at the hands of the Fairfaxes. With Newcastle retreating to York, and the midland royalists scattered and disorganised, the hopes of the parliamentary cause suddenly brightened. "The threat from the north evaporated;" one historian has written, "indeed it was from the north that Parliament now looked for relief, and beyond relief victory."<sup>56</sup> For now the northern royalists had not only the Fairfaxes and the earl of Manchester to contend with, but also the certainty of a Scottish army coming to the assistance of parliament. All of this had been made possible by the Fairfaxes' absolute refusal to accept that they had been beaten.

During the latter months of 1643, the House of Commons had negotiated a military alliance with Scotland. The work of John Pym and Sir Henry Vane, the Solemn League and Covenant, as the agreement was called, provided for the common interests of both parliament and the Scots.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the Scots agreed to send an army of 21,000 men into England to assist parliament in the struggle against the King.<sup>58</sup> A committee, known as the Committee of Both Kingdoms, was created to direct the war according to both English and Scottish interests. Based at Derby House, in London, this committee was composed of seven peers, fourteen members of the House of Commons and four Scottish commissioners.<sup>59</sup> Between them, they hoped to turn the tide against the King.

However, for the Fairfaxes, far from events in London,



the war continued. After his victory at Winceby, Thomas Fairfax returned to Hull, but while the royalist forces in Yorkshire settled into winter quarters, the parliamentarians began to follow up their recent successes. Fairfax assisted in the capture of Lincoln, and later, on 20 December, he led an assault which gave parliament Gainsborough.<sup>60</sup> As he was about to go into winter quarters himself, he was ordered by the Committee of Both Kingdoms to go to the relief of Sir William Brereton, the parliamentary commander in the northwest, who was being besieged at Nantwich, in Cheshire, by an army of both English and Irish troops under the command of Lord Byron.

Fairfax's first reaction was reluctance, for in spite of the change in their fortunes, the Fairfaxes were still sorely lacking in many necessary supplies of arms and equipment. He wrote in his memoirs that:

I was the most unfit of all the forces, being ever the worst paid, my men sickly, and almost naked for want of clothes. I desired the Parliament that they would be pleased to supply these wants...But their answer was a positive direction to march, for it would admit of no delay: which indeed was as grievous to me as that injunction was to the Israelites, to make bricks without straw....<sup>61</sup>

Although he lacked "straw," Fairfax borrowed money on his own credit, and clothed 1,500 of his men ready for the expedition.<sup>62</sup>

On 29 December, Fairfax set out with 3,300 horse and joined with Brereton's forces on 21 January 1644. At the





approach of Fairfax, Lord Byron drew off his army, which numbered about 4,800, and prepared to meet the parliamentarians in pitched battle. With the addition of Brereton's troops to those of Fairfax, the opposing armies were almost equal in strength. This indeed was the first time that Fairfax had encountered such favourable odds. In fact, Fairfax probably had a slight superiority. The fight which followed, on 29 January, ended in a complete rout for the royalists. Fairfax captured 1,500 prisoners, including all major officers -among them George Monck, later to be one of the architects of the restoration of Charles II- and all of the royalist arms, ammunition and ordnance. He sent a letter to the earl of Essex, in which he described the battle in a concise and to-the-point manner,<sup>63</sup> but in his memoirs, he could not refrain from revealing his pride in his army which had "not to deal with young soldiers, but with men of great experience, and an army which had ever been victorious."<sup>64</sup> It is evident that Thomas Fairfax's reputation was growing by leaps and bounds. His shorthanded victories in Yorkshire and his activities at Winceby and elsewhere in Lincolnshire had brought him to the attention of the parliamentary leaders in London. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that he was singled out to relieve Brereton in Cheshire. The Committee of Both Kingdoms anticipated that his ability would compensate for whatever he lacked in supply. Perhaps, in addition, he was already being considered as a successor to the indecisive



and often blundering earl of Essex.

Thomas Fairfax remained in Cheshire for another two months, during which time he captured many royalist towns and fortified houses, and completely restored parliamentary control. Ever aware of where his original source of support lay, and taking advantage of his superiority in numbers, he sent Colonel John Lambert -who was to figure prominently later in the events of the restoration- into the West Riding to recover the cloth towns. Lambert, a capable soldier, rapidly accomplished this task and left garrisons of parliamentary troops.

Eventually, in March 1644, Fairfax received orders from the Committee of Both Kingdoms that sent him back to Yorkshire.<sup>65</sup> The Committee, exhilarated by the turn of events in the north, now wanted Ferdinando Fairfax to bring his army out of Hull and take the field against Newcastle,<sup>66</sup> who now had his hands full watching the Scottish army, under Alexander Lord Leven, in Durham. The Scots had crossed the border in January of 1644, according to the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant, and now Newcastle faced the possibility of being caught between the hammer and the anvil. Thus, Thomas Fairfax was ordered to collect all the horse of Cheshire and Lancashire and join with his father's infantry at Selby. The royalist Governor of York, Colonel John Bellasis, younger brother of Henry Bellasis, intercepted a letter which revealed the parliamentary intentions. He hurriedly



occupied Selby, as he thought that by obstructing the junction of the Fairfaxes he would prevent them from joining with the Scots.<sup>67</sup>

In April, Thomas Fairfax moved his cavalry east towards Yorkshire. "We met in Ferrybridge," he wrote later, "he being come out of Hull thither, with intention to fall upon the enemy's garrison at Selby."<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately for Bellasis, the Fairfaxes, forewarned of his actions, had met further down the river Ouse.

The fight at Selby, although small in terms of numbers, is important in that it precipitated the siege of York and the battle at Marston Moor. Thomas Fairfax's horse completely shattered the royalist garrison, and the few survivors fled to York. Colonel Bellasis was taken prisoner and the road to York was laid bare.<sup>69</sup> Clarendon wrote, somewhat insultingly, that "this was the first action Sir Thomas Fairfax was taken notice for, who in a short time grew the supreme general under the Parliament."<sup>70</sup> The truth is that the Committee of Both Kingdoms had "taken notice" of Thomas Fairfax long before Selby, and this comment merely reveals how confused Clarendon was on many of the issues of the first Civil War. The Venetian ambassador, on the other hand, wrote a concise report on the battle at Selby, and taking note of the movements of the various armies, remarked prophetically: "So at any moment news is expected of some remarkable military action from the north."<sup>71</sup> "Some remarkable military action"





was indeed about to happen.

The remnants of Bellasis' garrison returned to York, and immediately demanded that Newcastle come to the aid of the city. He arrived on 19 April, closely followed by Lord Leven's Scots. On that same day, the Fairfaxes drew up their forces before York, and began the siege with a united Yorkshire and Scottish army of over 20,000 men. Within five weeks, and at the request of Ferdinando Fairfax, the earl of Manchester brought up his army from Lincolnshire. These additional forces swelled the parliamentary host to 26,000 men.<sup>72</sup> Newcastle had brought 6,000 men to York, but even with these forces the defenders of the city were heavily outnumbered. The royalists' only hope of salvation was that the King would send his nephew, Prince Rupert, to their relief. Once again, a timely victory for the Fairfaxes had provided parliament with an opportunity to take the initiative in the war.

The siege of York, despite its importance, is not very well documented, and one of the few accounts of its duration is to be found in the memoirs of Thomas Fairfax.<sup>73</sup> According to the sources, the initial reaction of the parliamentarians was one of indecision. In effect, the parliamentary army now had three commanding generals: Ferdinando Fairfax, Lord Leven and the earl of Manchester. Manchester was all for storming the city at once, and one of his subordinates made an abortive attempt which was repulsed with





heavy losses.<sup>74</sup> Ferdinando Fairfax and Leven, on the other hand, were satisfied to wait and consolidate their position before deciding on a course of action. Throughout the month of May 1644, the Committee of Both Kingdoms wrote numerous letters to the besiegers of York in which it emphasised that cooperation was of the greatest importance.<sup>75</sup> It is evident that the Committee feared a rupture between the commanders, and to prevent this sent Sir Henry Vane to York to act as an intermediary between the military and London.<sup>76</sup> The intervention of Vane provided the solution. After consultation, it was decided that Lord Leven, the earl of Manchester and Ferdinando Fairfax be made joint commissioners for the Committee of Both Kingdoms resident in the north.<sup>77</sup> The Committee also agreed to the decision of the generals to stay at York, and their resolution that they would deal with any relief force if and when it arrived.<sup>78</sup> With these problems solved, the parliamentary army remained before York throughout the month of June.

The Committee of Both Kingdoms, although mainly concerned with the situation at York, also sent many warnings of the activities of Prince Rupert in the west.<sup>79</sup> Gathering all available local forces, he had been urged by the King to go to the assistance of Newcastle. Charles wrote to him and explained the nature of his predicament:

I must give you the true state of my affairs, which, if their condition be such as enforces me to give you more peremptory commands than I would willingly



do, you must not take it ill. If York be lost, I shall esteem my crown little less, unless supported by your sudden march to me, and a miraculous conquest in the south, before the effects of the northern power can be found here; but if York be relieved, and you beat the rebel armies of both kingdoms which are before it, then, but otherwise not, I may possibly make a shift (upon the defensive) to spin out time, until you come to assist me: wherefore I command and conjure you...that (all new enterprises laid aside) you immediately march (according to your first intention) with all your force to the relief of York....<sup>80</sup>

Rupert wasted little time in carrying out the wishes of his uncle. After sacking the town of Bolton with a ferocity and brutality that he had learned in the German wars, he advanced by a circuitous route through Lancashire and Yorkshire. On one occasion he stayed a night at Denton, but refrained from obliterating his adversaries' property.<sup>81</sup> By this time, Rupert had enlarged his army to about 14,000 men by combining with the forces of Colonel Goring, who after his exchange had rejoined the King's army. Together, they reached York on 1 July 1644.

The parliamentarians, having received news of Rupert's approach, and deferring to the insistence of Leven that they avoid a fight at this juncture, drew off to the west and allowed him to send Goring's horse into the city. The parliamentary retreat was covered by a rearguard under Thomas Fairfax, Major-General David Leslie of the Scottish army and Oliver Cromwell, who had come north with Manchester in May. "We sent word to the Generals," wrote Fairfax, "of the necessity of making a stand. For else, the



enemy, having the advantage, might put us in some disorder, but by the advantage of the ground we were on, we hoped to make it good till they came back to us. The place was Marston Fields, which afterwards gave the name to this battle."<sup>82</sup>

The parliamentary generals agreed with the rear-guard's suggestion, and on the morning of 2 July 1644 the entire army drew up on Marston Moor. Although estimates vary slightly, the strength of the parliamentary army seems to have been within the region of 26,000 men.<sup>83</sup> Thomas Fairfax states in his memoirs that after joining with Newcastle's forces, Rupert's army numbered "about 23,000 or 24,000 men. But we, something more."<sup>84</sup> However, there has been much debate over the numbers under the command of Rupert. Practically all of the sources give a different figure. C.H. Firth wrote an essay on the battle in which he estimated, after a painstaking investigation, that Rupert cannot have had more than 17,500 men in the field.<sup>85</sup>

The following discussion of the battle, apart from a brief outline of the opposing forces, will be restricted to the activities of the Fairfaxes, and in particular, the contribution of Thomas Fairfax to the victory. Very simply, the three parliamentary generals commanded the combined English and Scottish infantry, and faced the royalist infantry under Newcastle. On the left wing, Oliver Cromwell and Major-General David Leslie faced the royalist horse of Lord Byron and Rupert. On the right wing, Thomas Fairfax



and Colonel John Lambert faced the royalist horse under Colonel Goring and Sir Charles Lucas. Of importance is that the parliamentarians had a marked superiority in cavalry.<sup>86</sup>

Despite their advantages, the battle did not go well for the parliamentarians in the early stages. Cromwell's horse "charged first the enemy's right wing, which was performed for a while with much resolution on both sides, but the enemy at length, was put to the worst."<sup>87</sup> The infantry under Lord Leven, Ferdinando Fairfax and Manchester were hard-pressed by the royalist musketeers and cavalry, and thinking the battle lost the raw Scottish levies broke and fled. They were soon followed by the Yorkshire regiments, and both Leven and Fairfax left the field.<sup>88</sup> It is to the earl of Manchester's credit, hesitant soldier that he was, that he remained in the battle and maintained resistance in the centre.

Thomas Fairfax, in the meantime, had found it hard to make progress on the right side of the battlefield:

Our right wing had not, all so good success, by reason of the whins [furze] and ditches which we were to pass over before we could get to the enemy, which put us into great disorder, notwithstanding I drew up a body of 400 horse. But because the intervals of their horse, in this wing only, were lined with musketeers, which did us much hurt with their shot, I was necessitated to charge them. We were a long time engaged one with another, but at last we routed that part of their wing. We charged, and pursued them [Goring's horse] a good way towards York....<sup>89</sup>

When Fairfax returned to the right side of the





battlefield, he found that Lambert's regiment had been charged and scattered by the remaining royalist horse under Sir Charles Lucas. "So that the good success we had at first," he wrote, "was eclipsed much by this bad conclusion."<sup>90</sup> Lambert's inability to repel the charge of the other part of the royalist left wing was rectified only by the timely reappearance of Fairfax. Seeing the plight of the right wing, and determined to restore parliamentary superiority, he single-handedly made his way through the royalist lines to get help. Although he removed his parliamentary token from his helmet, he was recognised and shot at as he proceeded.<sup>91</sup>

At this point in the battle, Rupert had gone off to plunder the parliamentary baggage, and had left Cromwell supreme on the left wing. However, Cromwell seems to have done nothing to exploit his numerical superiority. This inaction on his part led to many accusations after the battle, and one writer, Denzil Holles, denigrated him greatly in his memoirs, and gave the credit of the victory to the efforts of Thomas Fairfax and Major-General David Leslie.<sup>92</sup>

What was said between Fairfax and Cromwell when they met we shall never know, but as two historians have written, "it is possible that Fairfax, who was senior, ordered him to attack."<sup>93</sup> With the addition of Cromwell's cavalry, Fairfax wheeled to the right side of the battlefield and completely routed the remainder of Lucas' horse. The royalist infantry were now exposed to the full attack of the parliamentary



cavalry, and as they refused to surrender, many were slaughtered. As Fairfax laconically noted in his memoirs, "Of the enemy's part, there were above 4,000 slain, and many taken prisoners."<sup>94</sup> He himself suffered personal loss, as his only brother, Charles, was mortally wounded and died a few days later. Fairfax also received a sabre cut which opened his left cheek, and left him scarred for the rest of his life.

The battle of Marston Moor proved to be the death knell of the royalist cause in the north, and in some respects, it could be argued that it effectively finished the King entirely, as he was never able to recover from the great losses that were inflicted upon him there. Newcastle, seeking salvation in flight, went to Scarborough and took ship for the Low Countries.<sup>95</sup> Rupert, made of sterner stuff, gathered about 6,000 horse and made his way back to Lancashire.<sup>96</sup> Two weeks after the battle, and after a short renewal of the siege, the city of York surrendered, "and the north now was wholly reduced by the Parliament's forces, except some garrisons."<sup>97</sup>

During the summer and autumn of 1644, Thomas Fairfax assisted in the siege of these garrisons, but at Helmsley Castle he received a ball in the shoulder and a broken arm which sent him back to York. "All, for some time," he wrote later in his memoirs, "being doubtful of my recovery. Yet, at the same time, the Parliament voted me to command in the



south."<sup>98</sup>

The little-known Yorkshire knight of 1642 had now become the greatest hope for victory in 1645.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup>P. Zagorin, The Court and the Country: The Beginning of the English Revolution (New York, 1970), p.343; also see Woolrych, "Yorkshire's Neutrality," pp.696-704, for details of the treaty.

<sup>2</sup>Rushworth, III, i, 686.

<sup>3</sup>Clarendon, ii, 463.

<sup>4</sup>Fairfax, p.353.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.365-66.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.366.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.367.

<sup>9</sup>Sir Henry Slingsby, The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby, of Scriven, Bart (London, 1836), p.83.

<sup>10</sup>Markham, p.73; also see J. Vicars, Jehovah Jireh: God in the Mount (1641-October 1642) (London, 1647), p.230, for an account of the fight at Tadcaster.

<sup>11</sup>Fairfax, p.368.

<sup>12</sup>Vicars, p.230.

<sup>13</sup>HMC Cowper, ii, 327-28. Edward Reed to Sir John Coke, 19 December 1642.

<sup>14</sup>Markham, p.80; also see EC Civil War, i, 33-34. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 9 January 1643.

<sup>15</sup>Fairfax, p.370.

<sup>16</sup>Commons Journal, ii, 899.

<sup>17</sup>Fairfax, p.371.





<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.372.

<sup>20</sup>Commons Journal, ii, 947.

<sup>21</sup>C.H. Firth, "Sir Hugh Cholmley's Narrative of the Siege of Scarborough, 1644-45," English Historical Review (1917), xxxii, 569-73, for details of Cholmley's defection from the parliamentary side. Also see CSP Ven., 1642-43, p.260. Gerolamo Agostini to the Doge and Senate, 10 April 1643; and also C.V. Wedgwood, The King's War 1641-1647 (London, 1958), p.169.

<sup>22</sup>Commons Journal, ii, 923.

<sup>23</sup>Fairfax, pp.375-76.

<sup>24</sup>A. Woolrych, Battles of the English Civil War (London, 1961), p.41.

<sup>25</sup>Fairfax, p.376.

<sup>26</sup>Commons Journal, ii, 993-94.

<sup>27</sup>Markham, p.99; Fairfax, p.377.

<sup>28</sup>Somers Tracts (1809-15), iv, 542.

<sup>29</sup>Fairfax, p.377.

<sup>30</sup>Peacock, "Civil War Documents," p.103. Ferdinando Lord Fairfax to Speaker William Lenthall, 23 May 1643.

<sup>31</sup>S.R. Gardiner, History of the Great Civil War (London, 1904), i, 162.

<sup>32</sup>Fairfax, pp.378-79.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.379.

<sup>34</sup>Markham, p.104.

<sup>35</sup>Fairfax, p.379.

<sup>36</sup>Markham, p.106.

<sup>37</sup>Fairfax, p.381.

<sup>38</sup>Wedgwood, King's War, p.210

<sup>39</sup>Fairfax, p.381.



<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp.382-84.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p.384.

<sup>42</sup>P. Young & R. Holmes, The English Civil War: A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651 (London, 1974), p.113.

<sup>43</sup>Fairfax, p.384.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp.384-86.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.387.

<sup>46</sup>CSP Ven., 1642-43, p.305. Gerolamo Agostini to the Doge and Senate, 31 July 1643.

<sup>47</sup>Fairfax, pp.386-87.

<sup>48</sup>Broxap, "The Sieges of Hull," p.470.

<sup>49</sup>T.T. Wildridge, The Hull Letters (Hull, 1886), pp.37-38. Thomas Raikes, Mayor of Hull to Speaker William Lenthall, 7 July 1643. For further details on Raikes, a man of considerable ability, see Victoria County History: East Riding, i, 104-5.

<sup>50</sup>Fairfax, p.388.

<sup>51</sup>Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle (London, 1906), p.30. Also see Markham, p.119.

<sup>52</sup>Commons Journal, iii, 279.

<sup>53</sup>Fairfax, p.388.

<sup>54</sup>Woolrych, Battles, p.46.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>J.H. Hexter, The Reign of King Pym (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), p.151. Also see Kenyon, pp.263-66, for details of the Solemn League and Covenant.

<sup>58</sup>C.H. Firth, Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England (London, 1968), p.99.

<sup>59</sup>I. Roots, The Great Rebellion 1642-1660 (London, 1966), p.86.



<sup>60</sup>CSP Dom., 1641-43, p.508.

<sup>61</sup>Fairfax, p.390.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Bodleian Library, Tanner MS, lxii, ff.528-29. Sir Thomas Fairfax to the earl of Essex, 29 January 1644. Also see E. Broxap, The Great Civil War in Lancashire (Manchester, 1973), pp.98-99, for an account of the battle of Nantwich; and J.S. Morrill, Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution (London, 1974), p.76, for details of Fairfax's liaison with Brereton. See E. Ludlow, Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow (Oxford, 1894), i, 64, for a portrait of the "renegade" George Monck.

<sup>64</sup>Fairfax, p.392.

<sup>65</sup>CSP Dom., 1644, p.34.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p.85. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax and Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 31 March 1644.

<sup>67</sup>Markham, p.136. Also see J.W. Clay, "The Gentry of Yorkshire at the Time of the Civil War," The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal (1914-15), p.352, for details of John Bellasis.

<sup>68</sup>Fairfax, p.392.

<sup>69</sup>Rushworth, III, ii, 618. Ferdinando Lord Fairfax to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 12 April 1644, for an account of the fight at Selby.

<sup>70</sup>Clarendon, iii, 310.

<sup>71</sup>CSP Ven., 1643-47, p.96. Gerolamo Agostini to the Doge and Senate, 6 May 1644.

<sup>72</sup>Wedgwood, King's War, pp.288-89; Markham, p.139.

<sup>73</sup>Fairfax, pp.393-94.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p.394. Also see P. Wenham, The Great and Close Siege of York 1644 (Kington, Warwickshire, 1974), pp.59-67, for an account of the attack on York; and Rushworth, III, ii, 631.

<sup>75</sup>For an example see CSP Dom., 1644, p.187. The Committee of Both Kingdoms to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 28 May 1644.



<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p.192. The Committee of Both Kingdoms to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 1 June 1644.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p.225. Sir Henry Vane to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 11 June 1644.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp.206-7. "The Leaguer before York" to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 13 June 1644.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., pp.200-1. The Committee of Both Kingdoms to "The Leaguer before York," 3 June 1644.

<sup>80</sup>Sir C. Petrie, ed., The Letters of Charles I (New York, 1968), pp.144-45. Charles I to Prince Rupert, 14 June 1644.

<sup>81</sup>C.H. Firth, "The Journal of Prince Rupert's Marches, 5 September 1642 to 4 July 1646," English Historical Review (1898), xiii, 736.

<sup>82</sup>Fairfax, pp.394-95.

<sup>83</sup>Young & Holmes, p.197.

<sup>84</sup>Fairfax, p.394.

<sup>85</sup>C.H. Firth, "Marston Moor," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (1898), New Series, xii, 18-23.

<sup>86</sup>Young & Holmes, p.198.

<sup>87</sup>Fairfax, p.395.

<sup>88</sup>A.D.H. Leadman, "The Battle of Marston Moor," The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal (1891), pp.316-18. Also see Young & Holmes, p.201.

<sup>89</sup>Fairfax, p.395.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>P. Young, Marston Moor 1644 (Kineton, Warwickshire, 1970), p.134; Fairfax, p.396.

<sup>92</sup>Denzil Lord Holles, Memoirs (London, 1699), p.15; also see Young, Marston Moor, p.128.

<sup>93</sup>Young & Holmes, p.201.

<sup>94</sup>Fairfax, p.397.

<sup>95</sup>Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, pp.41-42.





<sup>96</sup>Firth, "Rupert's Marches," p.737.

<sup>97</sup>Fairfax, p.397.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER THREE

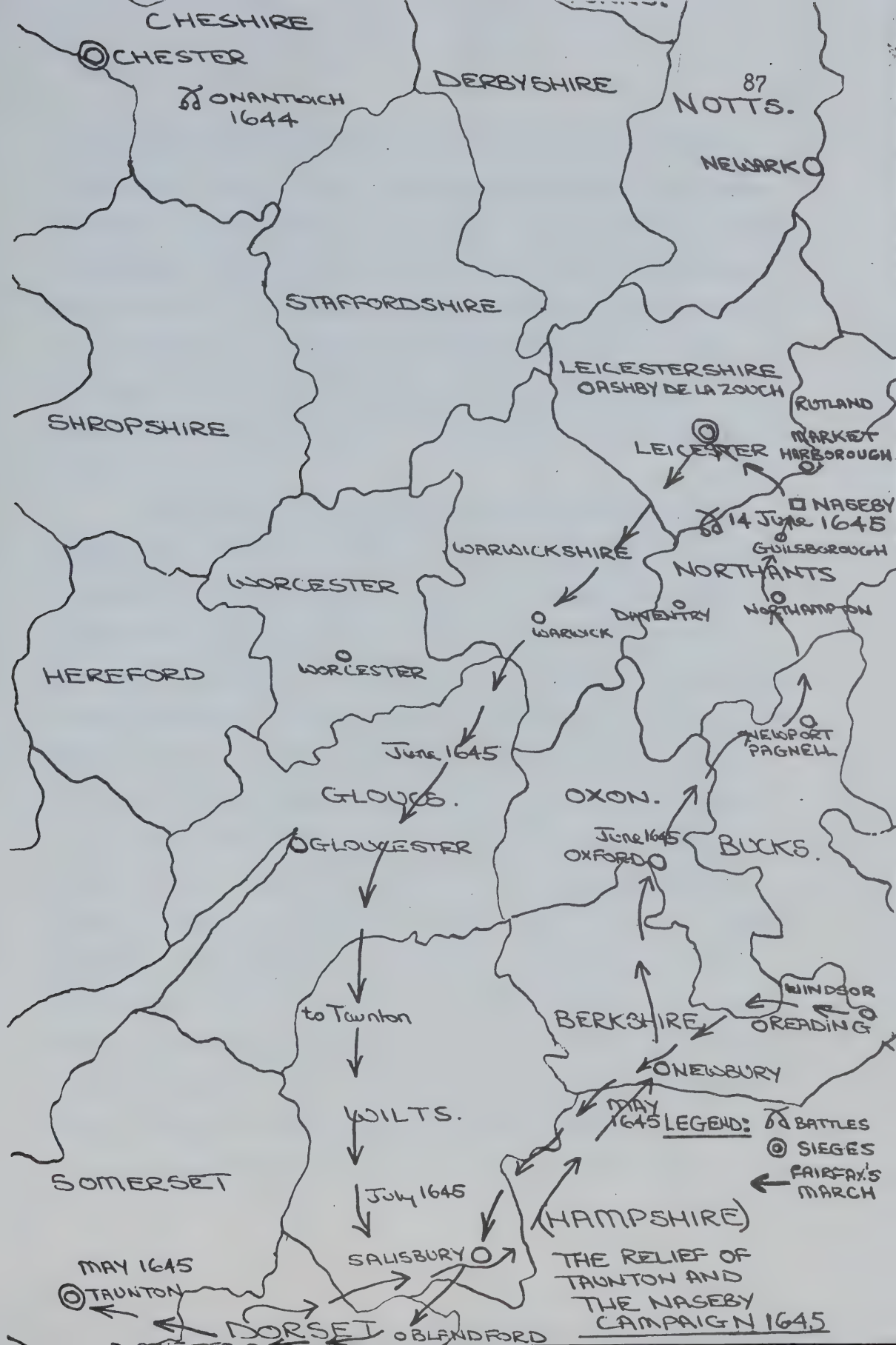
### THE NEW MODEL ARMY AND NASEBY (1644-1645)

Nothing was expected now but new war for a new summer.

Sir Henry Slingsby

On 9 December 1644, Oliver Cromwell rose in the House of Commons and made a speech in which he criticized the parliamentary military commanders and their handling of the Civil War. "I do conceive," he said, "if the army be not put into another method, and the war more vigorously prosecuted, the people can bear the war no longer, and will enforce you to a dishonourable peace."<sup>1</sup> Cromwell's outburst was prompted by the fact that despite the military successes of the army in the north of England, the parliamentary cause remained extremely precarious. The battle of Marston Moor had all but extinguished the royalist threat in Yorkshire and the surrounding counties, but the King still controlled considerable forces in the west country and the midlands. The







parliamentary armies in the south, unlike their northern counterpart, had met with little success during the summer of 1644. Both the earl of Essex and Sir William Waller were discredited for their failure to inflict a crushing defeat on the King at the second battle of Newbury on 27 October,<sup>2</sup> and dissension and internal strife became more and more evident as Cromwell and others grumbled publicly about the earl of Manchester's apparent reluctance to continue the war.

Cromwell's suggestion of "another method" meant simply that the armies had to be completely overhauled and properly equipped, but the question of leadership needed instant and decisive action. When Cromwell finished his speech, Zouch Tate,<sup>3</sup> the member for Northampton and chairman of the Committee for Army Affairs, immediately rose and proposed that all peers and members of the House of Commons holding military commands should be called upon to resign.

Ten days later, on 19 December, the Self-Denying Ordinance was passed by the House of Commons, but was rejected by the House of Lords on 13 January 1645. It appears that the Lords resented the attempt to exclude them from any involvement with the army. "If there was to be a New Model," wrote S.R. Gardiner, "they wished their own members to be at the head of it. Their motives were intelligible enough. Their prudence was less discernible."<sup>4</sup>

Disregarding the opposition of the Lords, the





Commons pressed on with its plans for a new army, and on 3 April 1645 the Lords finally conceded and passed the Ordinance.<sup>5</sup> The day before its acceptance, Manchester and Essex, anticipating the outcome of the debate, resigned their commands.<sup>6</sup> However, two months previously, the Commons had already decided that the command of the projected New Model Army was to be given to Sir Thomas Fairfax, even though he lay wounded in York and was uncertain when, if ever, he would be able to take up arms again.<sup>7</sup>

The House of Commons took a calculated risk in appointing Thomas Fairfax Commander-in-Chief of the New Model Army. In some ways he was an obvious choice. His military ability was beyond question, as evidenced by his great achievements at Wakefield, Winceby, Nantwich, Selby and Marston Moor. His doggedness and determination had enabled him to confound the marquis of Newcastle for two years, and eventually terminate royalist power in the north at the battle of Marston Moor. "If he had a fault as a soldier," said Gardiner, "it lay in his habit of plunging unthinkingly into the thick of the fight, regardless of his duties as a commander."<sup>8</sup> Above all, Fairfax was acceptable to all concerned in that he remained aloof from the political squabbles that racked the armies of the south. The Commons could rely on his loyalty and obedience, and would not have to worry about whether he inclined to the Presbyterians or Independents. For once, the army would have a leader whose only



purpose was to win the war.

Fairfax was barely thirty-two years old at the time of his appointment: considerably younger than the majority of his colleagues. He had never commanded an entire army in the field, but the Commons reasoned that his ability to direct the Yorkshire forces could be applied on a larger scale. Their faith in him was to be justified in full.

Before he took the field, the royalists had little but contempt for Fairfax's appointment, even though many of them had had experience of him in the northern wars. In a letter to his wife, Henrietta Maria, Charles I referred to him as "the rebels' new brutish General."<sup>9</sup> Clarendon, as confused as ever, wrote:

And so they compassed their whole design, in being rid of all those whose affections they knew were not agreeable to theirs, and keeping Cromwell in command; who, in the name of Fairfax, modelled the army, and placed such officers as were well known to him, and to nobody else, and absolutely governed their whole martial affairs....<sup>10</sup>

This remark is so far from the truth that it severely damages Clarendon's credibility as a historian.

In addition, Fairfax's critics were not only to be found among the royalists. The parliamentarian, Denzil Holles, who had praised Fairfax's actions at Marston Moor, wrote this scurrilous description of his appointment:

...and for a commander-in-chief Sir Thomas Fairfax is found out; one, as Sir Arthur Haslerig said, as if he had been hewed out of the block for them, fit for their turns to do whatever they will have him, without considering or being able to judge



whether honourable or honest.

But this General made no bones, took it, and thanked them, resolved (as it seems) to do whatsoever those his masters should bid him...The next work was how again to get in my friend Cromwell; for he was to have the power, Sir Thomas Fairfax only the name of General; he to be the figure, the other the cypher....<sup>11</sup>

The Venetian ambassador, Contarini, noted with apparent disinterest that the command of the land forces had been "subsequently granted to Fairfax, an individual of much lower rank."<sup>12</sup>

Fairfax himself does not seem to have been particularly confident at the news of his appointment. His remarks in his memoirs reveal a certain reluctance and hesitation:

...so as, in this distemper of affairs, the army was new modelled; and a new General was proposed to command it. For which, by the votes of the two Houses of Parliament, myself was nominated; though most unfit: and so far from desiring of it, that had not so great an authority commanded obedience ...besides the persuasions of nearest friends, not to decline so free and general a call; I should have hid myself to have avoided so great a charge. But whether it was from a natural facility in me, that betrayed my modesty; or the powerful hand of God, which all things must obey: I was induced to receive the command....<sup>13</sup>

On 21 January 1645, the House of Commons voted on the appointment of Fairfax as Commander-in-Chief. One hundred and one members voted in favour, as opposed to sixty-nine against.<sup>14</sup> It is of interest that Cromwell and Vane were for him and Holles against.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Sir Philip Skippon was appointed Major-General of the New Model Army, and became, in effect, second in command to Fairfax.<sup>16</sup>



For the time being, the post of Lieutenant-General of Horse was left vacant.

At the beginning of February 1645, while convalescing at York, Fairfax received a letter from the House of Commons asking him to come to London as soon as possible to receive his commission and orders. Although wounded, he quickly settled his affairs and left for London, leaving Colonel John Lambert in command of his Yorkshire cavalry regiment.<sup>17</sup> "I took my journey southward," he wrote in his memoirs, "hoping I might be someway serviceable to the public."<sup>18</sup> By 18 February, Fairfax had arrived in London, accompanied by his uncle, Sir William Constable, Colonels Rigby, Sandys and Alured, and a few other officers of the northern army.<sup>19</sup> On the following day, he attended the session of the House of Commons and received the praise of the members for his efforts during the last two years. He was compared to Agamemnon and various Roman heroes,<sup>20</sup> and stood bareheaded and bandaged as Speaker William Lenthall spoke before a hushed House of the great charge that was to be laid upon him:

That the parliament of England has commanded up your service hither from the northern parts. They have heard of your valour; and have had experience thereof, for their safety; and have now thought fit to put upon you the greatest trust and confidence, for the security of the kingdom, this House, religion, and liberty, as was ever put in the hands of a subject. They have resolved to put a trust upon you, the command of a very great army; which they do not intend to employ in for a matter of discouragement,





but will take care such provisions be made, to enable you to go on in this great business, that your thoughts shall be solely on action: and they are confident of your fidelity, care, and diligence in this cause of God, and the kingdom, that lie at stake. And for the faithful services you have done for the public, I am commanded, by the House to return their hearty thanks; and, under God, hope you may be a means to preserve this kingdom. And if you have any propositions to make now, or hereafter, concerning the Army, the House will take them into speedy consideration....<sup>21</sup>

The appointment of Fairfax to "the command of a very great army" now provided parliament with an opportunity to win total victory over the King.

Three days before Fairfax's arrival in London, on 15 February, both Houses had voted on and passed the Ordinance for the New Model Army.<sup>22</sup> The new army was to consist of 6,600 horse divided into eleven regiments of six hundred each. In addition, there was to be one regiment of 1,000 dragoons divided into ten companies of one hundred each. The foot, to be recruited to a strength of 14,400, would consist of twelve regiments divided into companies of 1,200 each. The army was to be paid "according to the establishment hereafter to be made by both Houses." The Ordinance also provided that all officers, nominated by Fairfax but subject to the approval of both Houses, would be required to "take the National League and Covenant of both kingdoms" within twenty to twenty-eight days of their appointment.

Also, Fairfax himself was made aware of the fact



that he would "from time to time be subject to such orders and directions as he shall receive from both Houses or from the Committee of Both Kingdoms."<sup>23</sup> This last provision is somewhat puzzling, in that having given Fairfax the powers and resources to blend the southern armies into a single instrument of warfare directed by a sole commander, parliament still intended to control the war through a committee in London. Fortunately, parliament eventually came to see the error of this arrangement, and relinquished its direction of strategy to Fairfax by giving him complete independence of action.

Towards the end of February 1645, Fairfax and Sir Philip Skippon began their preparations for the "new-modelling" of the armies. It was decided that a general rendezvous of all the existing forces in the south would be held at Windsor.<sup>24</sup> It is ironic that Windsor, the favourite haunt of many monarchs, became the forge from which came the army that would crush Charles I. The town of Reading was also selected as a collecting station for recruits from the eastern counties. Gathered and supervised by veterans, the recruits were then marched off to Windsor.

Major-General Skippon, nicknamed "the old man" by his troops, saw to the raising and drilling of the foot. He faced numerous problems. Many of the regiments from the armies of Essex and Manchester had dwindled to less than a third of their original strength by the spring of 1645.



With parliament's approval, the various county committees resorted to the impressment of men in order to fill the quotas allocated to them.<sup>25</sup> Many of the new recruits were reluctant to become musketeers or pikemen when they contemplated the extra pay and glamorous life of the mounted trooper. In fact, when the New Model Army took the field, its strength in foot was 4,000 below that projected on paper.<sup>26</sup> But, under Skippon's capable direction, the New Model foot became a well-trained and efficient fighting force.

The horse, on the other hand, presented no problems. Recruits were abundant and eager, and thus the quotas were soon filled. In all fairness to Cromwell, it must be said that Fairfax built his cavalry regiments around the nucleus of the horse of the Eastern Association. Only a fool would not have. In addition, Fairfax was able to call upon the services of some of his subordinate officers from the northern army. The services of most were still required in the north, and consequently Fairfax was forced to deny the request of petitioners in the Yorkshire regiments. "We are given to understand that your honour is called into the southern parts," they wrote in their petition, "and humbly crave at your hands, that your honour would accept of the service of this regiment, who are ready to wait upon you, and hazard their lives with you wheresoever you should be called..."<sup>27</sup> The threat presented by the marquis of Montrose



had necessitated the wholesale transfer of a large number of Lord Leven's Scottish forces back to Scotland. Consequently, none of the Yorkshire regiments could be moved to the south.

Fairfax and Skippon spent all of April 1645 at Windsor. Cromwell, persistently paraded by many modern historians as the creator of the New Model Army, had his hands full watching the royalist movements in the west country,<sup>28</sup> and could hardly have had time to assist his superiors in training the recruits. It is known that he visited Windsor on one occasion, ostensibly to surrender his command to Fairfax, but also to satisfy his curiosity as to how the new army was progressing.<sup>29</sup> As trained units became available they were sent to join Cromwell and Waller,<sup>30</sup> as parliament feared that the King or Rupert might strike while some of its best officers and the majority of its southern troops lay inactive. The greater part of the foot remained at Windsor, and by the end of April was almost ready to take the field.

In March, Fairfax had presented his list of senior officers to parliament. A fierce argument broke out between the two Houses.<sup>31</sup> The Lords considered that his list included too many common and low-born men, and resented the fact that the aristocracy had been almost completely neglected. The Commons fought back, and supported Fairfax's nominees who, as they rightly maintained, had been picked





for their loyalty and ability. With a few minor changes, the Lords eventually accepted the appointments.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, the war continued. In the far north, Montrose had inflicted a string of defeats upon the Covenanting army of the Scots, and thus prevented Leven from obtaining any more reinforcements. The northern army, under Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, was fully occupied in besieging royalist-held fortresses in Yorkshire,<sup>33</sup> but was still urged to be prepared to send assistance to Brereton in Cheshire if he fell into difficulties.<sup>34</sup> The Committee of Both Kingdoms was extremely apprehensive about the activities of Hopton and Goring in the west country, and for this reason dispensed with the attendance of Cromwell and Waller in parliament, and allowed them to retain their commands. In spite of the Self-Denying Ordinance, certain commanders were kept on active service, but with the provision that they surrender their commissions to Fairfax forty days from the passing of the Ordinance. Thus, Cromwell and Waller were to remain in the field until 13 May 1645.<sup>35</sup>

On 15 April news arrived in London that Rupert and his brother, Prince Maurice, were recruiting in the midlands, and by the 20th it was known that Maurice had reached Oxford with 1,000 horse.<sup>36</sup> This fresh threat, coupled with the possibility of even more reinforcements coming with Rupert, prompted the Committee of Both Kingdoms to exhort Fairfax to hasten his preparations and take the field. By the



beginning of May, Fairfax would be ready to move. The western forces were recalled and incorporated into the main body of the New Model Army, and Waller resigned his commission and returned to London.<sup>37</sup> Cromwell, in the meantime, had clashed twice with Goring, who had proved an equal match.<sup>38</sup> He returned to Windsor on 20 April, but was immediately sent off again by Fairfax. While Cromwell had been campaigning in the west country, Fairfax had asked for his services for another forty days. For once, both the Lords and Commons agreed, and granted the request.<sup>39</sup>

On the day that Cromwell joined Fairfax at Windsor, news was brought that the King had left Oxford and moved north-west towards Worcester. He had united with Rupert, and with this considerable force intended to go into the northern counties and exert pressure upon the Scots.<sup>40</sup> If Montrose was able to come south and meet up with the King, the consequences for parliament would be catastrophic. Fairfax sent Cromwell after the royalist army, and instructed him to report its each and every movement. By 10 May, it was known that the King had entered Worcester.<sup>41</sup>

During the last weeks of April, the Committee of Both Kingdoms had agonized over whether to invest Oxford or relieve the town of Taunton, in Somerset, which had held out against the royalists for over two months. The Committee finally decided on the relief of Taunton,<sup>42</sup> and ordered Fairfax and the New Model Army into the west country. Fairfax



had left Windsor at the beginning of May, but did not receive confirmation of his orders to relieve Taunton until the 12th.<sup>43</sup> In the intervening period, the activities of the King had become well known, and it must have come as a great surprise to Fairfax that the New Model Army was to be used as a relief force, and was not to be sent against the King.

It should be mentioned here, that although the royalists had intelligence of the formation of the New Model Army, they do not seem to have been unduly worried by it. Derisively, they referred to it as the "New Noddle." Fairfax himself had some misgivings, which were inflated by some of the remarks that he heard in London. "Insomuch," he wrote, "as when I went to take my leave of a great person; he told me, he was very sorry I was going out with the army, for he did believe we should be beaten."<sup>44</sup> In his edition of Fairfax's memoirs, C.H. Firth asks if this can have been Denzil Holles. This is unlikely, as Fairfax would hardly have described Holles as "a great person." It is known, however, that Fairfax met on occasion with Essex,<sup>45</sup> and therefore it is possible that this baleful comment came from the lugubrious earl. Regardless of its source, this prophecy of doom cannot have failed to impress upon Fairfax the fact that if he was beaten when it came to the test, the cause of parliament could well be lost.

By the first week of May 1645, Fairfax had moved the New Model Army out of Windsor and into Wiltshire. He



reached Salisbury before the royalists were even aware of his coming south-west.<sup>46</sup> Under his command, he had only about 14,000 of the army's projected strength of 22,000 men, as four regiments were still being trained, and the remainder were either with Cromwell or in garrisons in the counties around London.<sup>47</sup> While Fairfax pressed on into the west country, the royalist commanders decided upon what course of action to take. Rupert and Sir Marmaduke Langdale, the commander of the northern horse, were all for continuing the march to the north. Rupert was eager to avenge the defeat at Marston Moor, and was well aware that the Yorkshire forces had lost the services of both of the Fairfaxes, as Lord Fairfax had now been replaced by General Sydenham Poyntz, according to the terms of the Self-Denying Ordinance.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, Goring and George Lord Digby were for falling upon Fairfax's army in the west. Rupert, emphasising that only Poyntz and the depleted forces of Leven lay before them, held sway over the King. The bulk of the royalist army continued its trek north with Cromwell in pursuit, but Goring detached his cavalry, and with the King's reluctantly given permission returned to the west.

The Committee of Both Kingdoms, now realising the gravity of the situation, decided that Fairfax's march into the west country was a waste of time, and more importantly a misuse of a very valuable army. He received orders to halt the army, but send on a smaller relieving force. Fairfax





knew that the royalist commander before Taunton, Sir Richard Grenville, had scouts watching his every move, and for this reason he made a pretence of continuing his march. When the New Model Army reached Dorchester, in Dorset, Fairfax abruptly turned it about-face and returned towards Hampshire. A relief force of about 6,000 men, under Colonel Weldon, raced on to Taunton, where the royalists, suspecting that the entire army was descending upon them, quickly raised the siege and drew off. Weldon entered Taunton on 14 May, and joined his forces with those of the parliamentary commander, Robert Blake.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, neither Fairfax nor Weldon knew that Goring's horse were approaching, and consequently Taunton was soon besieged again by the combined forces of both Grenville and Goring.

On the day that Weldon relieved Taunton, Fairfax and the New Model Army reached Newbury, in Berkshire. The Committee of Both Kingdoms informed him that reinforcements had been sent to join the Scots in Westmorland. The letter continued:

The rest of the forces that are left with Cromwell are to march back towards Bletchington, and having put a garrison into that house he is to dispose his remaining forces in the best way that may be for straitening of Oxford, which we have designed to be blocked up forthwith in order to a siege by those forces at present with you and with Cromwell...We have designed this as the main action, to be prosecuted with all such forces as are not already employed elsewhere, unless any especial exigency should require these forces to be otherwise employed....<sup>50</sup>

Fairfax must have been astounded by these orders.



His army chaplain, Joshua Sprigge, who wrote an invaluable account of the New Model Army and its activities during the last two years of the first Civil War, wrote that Fairfax reluctantly accepted the Committee's decision "which was no more disputed than the former commands at Blandford; but forthwith obeyed, how much soever it was against his opinion."<sup>51</sup>

The New Model Army, created for the sole purpose of seeking out and destroying the royalist army in one decisive blow, was once again to be kept in the south, while the King and Rupert advanced on the north. There was certainly an "especial exigency" requiring the services of the New Model Army, but for the time being it was to be ignored. By keeping Fairfax and Cromwell in the south, the Committee of Both Kingdoms was inviting disaster, as the meagre forces of Leven and Brereton were now exposed to the full weight of the royalist army. Obviously, the Committee did not appreciate the urgency of the situation in the north. Due, in large part, to the distance between London and the actual fighting, the decisions of the Committee were based upon information that had become obsolete by the time that it reached the south. The character of the war changed faster than the messengers could travel.

Day by day, the situation in the north became more and more critical. Letters were exchanged feverishly between Leven and Lord Fairfax, who although retired from the field,



remained as Governor of York. The letters are saturated with news of the King's advance, and fully illustrate the fears of the northern commanders. Sensibly enough, it was decided that Brereton terminate the siege of Chester and join Leven in Lancashire.<sup>52</sup>

By the middle of May, the King had reached Staffordshire. "For the general state of my affairs," he wrote to his wife, "we all here think to be very hopeful, this army being of a good strength, well ordered, and increasing."<sup>53</sup> The correspondence of May 1645 simply bursts with confidence, and reflects the royalist attitude toward the apparent wrong-headedness of the parliamentarians. It was a situation that one historian has called "a classic instance of how politics could bedevil strategy;" an example of the mismanagement of a war controlled by "civilian minds."<sup>54</sup> On 25 May, Sir Edward Nicholas wrote to the King in Staffordshire:

If Cromwell and Fairfax advance we shall endeavour to fight with them. I believe it will be about Leicester. I hope by this time Goring is near Oxford with his force. If we can be so happy as that he comes in time, we shall infallibly crush them between us. For God's sake quicken his march all that is possible, and desire him to send more often to advertise us of the steps of his advance, and how soon he is likely to be within distance of us....<sup>55</sup>

Nicholas' suspicion that Fairfax might advance at this time soon evaporated, for by 22 May, he had recalled Cromwell from hovering about the King's army, and had brought his forces to Oxford. Also, Goring had no intention of



returning to the King at this time. Together with Grenville, he had laid siege to Taunton.<sup>56</sup> His presence would be sorely missed when the crucial test came at the battle of Naseby a month later.

To the relief of Leven and Brereton, the King decided against any further advance towards Lancashire and moved east into Leicestershire. His purpose was to reach the royalist-held town of Newark, in Nottinghamshire, where he would be able to add to his growing forces. News of the arrival of the King at Ashby de la Zouch, prompted the Committee of Both Kingdoms to order Fairfax to send off Cromwell once again. With four troops of horse, Cromwell moved into Cambridgeshire on 28 May, and resumed his role as watchdog of the royalist army.<sup>57</sup> Fairfax, in the meantime, remained at Oxford, and sent for the artillery and ammunition at Windsor, which still had not arrived by the time he received orders to break the siege on 3 June.<sup>58</sup>

On 30 May, Fairfax was informed of the King's attack upon Leicester, and five days later was given orders to break camp and lift the siege.<sup>59</sup> This disaster finally roused the Committee of Both Kingdoms into action, and made its members realise the futility of keeping the bulk of the New Model Army out of the actual fighting. The mettle of the new army had to be tested sooner or later, and for this reason the Committee swallowed its fears and gave Fairfax an opportunity to prove its worth and justify its expense. On the day that





he received the order to move, Fairfax wrote to his father in the north, and voiced the frustrations that he had experienced during the previous month:

I am very sorry we should spend our time unprofitably before a town, while the King has time to strengthen himself, and by terror to force obedience of all places where he comes; the Parliament is sensible of this now, and therefore has sent me directions to raise the siege and march to Buckingham, where, I shall have orders to advance northwards, in such a course as all our divided parties may join. It is the earnest desire of this army to follow the King, but the endeavours of others to prevent it has so much prevailed; but I trust God will preserve it to do the public service: tomorrow I begin my march...<sup>60</sup>

On 5 June, Fairfax moved his army out of Buckinghamshire, and began his march into Northamptonshire. Throughout the course of the march, scattered units of the parliamentary forces came in to join him.<sup>61</sup>

The King, meanwhile, was reaping the fruits of his victory at Leicester. The parliamentary garrison, under the command of Colonel Sir Robert Pye, had fought stubbornly, and had made the royalists pay dearly for the capture of the town. Although most contemporary accounts are blatantly exaggerated, it does seem quite evident that some atrocities were committed by the royalists. Led by Rupert, the expert at sacking and looting, the royalist army ran amok in its search for plunder. Many of the prisoners taken later, at the battle of Naseby, had more than the equivalent of two months pay in their pockets.<sup>62</sup> The King, pleased by this turn of events, wrote to his wife on 8 June, "I may, without



being too much sanguine, affirm that since this rebellion my affairs were never in so hopeful a way."<sup>63</sup> Although extremely confident, Charles was greatly concerned with the disquieting reports that he had received about the plight of Oxford. Not knowing that Fairfax had lifted the siege and moved north, he impressed upon his commanders that the army should go to its relief. Against Rupert's advice,<sup>64</sup> he left a garrison in Leicester, and then marched south to the town of Daventry.<sup>65</sup>

By this time, 9 June, Fairfax's army was barely twenty miles from the King, and on that same day, he received a most welcome letter from the Committee of Both Kingdoms:

We have thought fit to take off all limitations or restrictions under which you may be placed by any former letters, leaving it wholly to you who are upon the spot to do that which by the advice of your council of War you shall judge most conducive to the public service....<sup>66</sup>

Finally, the Committee had realised that the situation was far too fluid, and far too rapidly changing, for it to be controlled from London. Throwing caution to the wind, the Committee now took the ultimate risk, and gave Fairfax a free hand in the field. He immediately called a council of war, and among other things, requested that the House of Commons allow him to retain the services of Cromwell for the time being.<sup>67</sup> The request was readily granted. Two days later, Fairfax wrote to Cromwell and informed him that the Commons had given him permission to appoint him Lieutenant-



General of the Horse, "during such time as that House shall be pleased to dispense with your attendance." In addition, Fairfax ordered Cromwell "to make speedy repair to this army."<sup>68</sup> Anticipating a pitched battle, he fully appreciated the value of having his ablest cavalry commander at his side, and not trailing in the wake of the King's army, as the Committee of Both Kingdoms had had him do on so many occasions. By relinquishing its control of the military affairs of Fairfax's army, the Committee had now ensured itself of victory. As S.R. Gardiner has pointed out, "Military questions were at last to be decided by military men."<sup>69</sup>

By 13 June, Fairfax had brought his army to the village of Guilsborough, about ten miles north of Northampton. The King's army lay at Market Harborough, about eleven miles to the north of the parliamentary camp, and had retreated there after having been harassed by an advance party of horse, under Commissary-General Henry Ireton.<sup>70</sup> As late as the 12th, Charles does not seem to have been unduly worried by Fairfax's approach. A prisoner revealed that he had spent most of the day hunting.<sup>71</sup>

On that same day and evening, two separate incidents occurred which go far to illustrate the fairness and absence of viciousness in Fairfax's character. During the day, a poor wretch, almost certainly a royalist spy, was brought before him. Rather than have him shot or hanged, Fairfax had him sent to Sir Samuel Luke, the parliamentary governor of





Newport Pagnell, in Buckinghamshire. Luke was instructed to keep the man incommunicado for a week, and then send him on his way.<sup>72</sup> That same night, and while his army slept, Fairfax undertook a scouting mission of his own. After seeing the fires and tents of the royalist army, and ascertaining its numbers, he returned to camp. On arriving, he could not remember the password when challenged by the sentry, and waited in the pouring rain while another trooper went for the captain of the guard. When identified as the Lord General, Fairfax proceeded to allay the trembling sentry's fears by commending him for his diligence and attention to duty.<sup>73</sup>

During the evening of 13 June, and amid great jubilation, Cromwell and his troopers arrived from Cambridge-shire. Another council of war was held, at which it was decided that, unless the King made good his escape in the night, battle would be offered in the morning. The royalists also held a meeting that night. The King was for standing and fighting, but Rupert urged a hasty withdrawal.<sup>74</sup> After heated discussion, Rupert gave way and conceded to the King's wishes. Rupert's reluctance did not stem from cowardice, but from the simple realisation that Fairfax's army was almost twice the size of his,<sup>75</sup> and Goring's 3,000 horse were still in the west country. On the morning of the 14th, Fairfax advanced his army towards the village of Naseby, not really sure of whether the King intended to fight or not. His scouts returned with reports that the royalist cavalry was beginning





to concentrate to the north of the village, and that the infantry was making no attempt to withdraw. It was readily apparent, that the King had determined to put the "New Noddle" army and its "brutish General" to the test.

By far the best and most detailed account of the battle of Naseby is that given by Joshua Sprigge in his Anglia Rediviva. His worth lies in the fact that he was an eyewitness to the action, whereas his contemporaries, for the most part, based their narratives on hearsay or second-hand information. Unlike Marston Moor, the numbers involved at Naseby are well documented. W.G. Ross carried out an exhaustive study of the numbers listed by all contemporary historians,<sup>76</sup> and found "that the army of the parliament at Naseby numbered some 13,500 men, of whom 7,000 were infantry and 6,500 horse and dragoons." On the other hand, "the force of the King, on that day, did not exceed 8,000 men, of whom half were foot and half were horse."<sup>77</sup> These figures are in all probability correct, for although the article was written in 1888, no modern historian has seen fit to contest Ross' findings.

Fairfax drew up his army on the ledge of a hill, just to the north of the village of Naseby, as the King's forces began to advance across an open field. Skippon commanded the New Model foot in the centre, and Cromwell the horse on the right wing. At Cromwell's suggestion, Fairfax appointed Ireton to the command of the horse on the left wing.



Unfortunately for Ireton, he faced the royalist right wing under Rupert, whereas Cromwell faced the Nottinghamshire horse under Sir Marmaduke Langdale. The King and Sir Jacob Astley commanded the royalist centre.

As the royalists advanced, Fairfax abruptly ordered the entire parliamentary army to retreat one hundred paces. This move, which must have momentarily perplexed the parliamentary commanders, brought the army back behind the brow of the hill, and allowed Fairfax to conceal his formations. As intended, the royalists took the bait, and the King was told that Fairfax was retreating in the direction of Northampton.

Unknown to the royalists, Fairfax had lined the hedges to the left of the battlefield with Colonel John Okey's regiment of dragoons. These troops, unlike the usual cavalry regiments, were equipped with muskets rather than pistols and generally fought on foot.<sup>78</sup> As Rupert's cavalry raced headlong at Ireton's wing, the dragoons poured a murderous fire into their ranks. Despite their losses, the royalist cavalry burst through Ireton's troopers, scattering them in all directions, but undisciplined as he was, Rupert could not resist continuing on to Naseby, and attacking the parliamentary baggage.

While Rupert went in search of plunder, the battle was lost. Cromwell's cavalry charged at Langdale's horse, and routed them easily. The two bodies of infantry clashed in the



centre, and the royalists were worsted, as Cromwell turned on them from his right wing, and Fairfax attacked them with his cavalry regiment and the remainder of Ireton's wing. Rupert returned to the battlefield in time to see the royalist army break and run for Leicester.<sup>79</sup>

In spite of the destruction of Ireton's wing, Rupert had exposed the royalist infantry by leaving the field. By taking advantage of Rupert's folly, Fairfax had been afforded the opportunity of delivering the decisive blow. In his A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England, Thomas May wrote that:

the Fairfaxians at last charged so fiercely upon the Royalists, that they no longer could endure the brunt; the horse in all disordered haste fled toward Leicester, and forsook the whole body of their foot, with their artillery and carriages, who, being surrounded by the Fairfaxians, threw down their arms, crying for quarter, and were all taken prisoners....<sup>80</sup>

The parliamentarians took 5,000 prisoners after the battle, and all the royalist artillery and baggage was captured. In his account, Sprigge remarks that "the whole booty of the field fell to the soldier, which was very rich and considerable, there being amongst it, besides the riches of the court and officers, the rich plunder of Leicester."<sup>81</sup>

The New Model Army had faced its baptism of fire, and had withstood it admirably. On 15 June, Fairfax wrote to London, and with his usual modesty informed the Committee of Both Kingdoms of his great victory. The letter is a very



straightforward and concise report of the events of the day, and contains little more than a list of the prisoners of note, guns and colours taken.<sup>82</sup> However, Cromwell wrote to Speaker William Lenthall, and described the course of the battle and its results. "The General served you with all faithfulness and honour;" he wrote of Fairfax, "and the best commendations I can give him is, that I dare say he attributes all to God, and would rather perish than assume to himself."<sup>83</sup>

In all fairness, it must be acknowledged that the addition of Goring's cavalry might have greatly changed the outcome of the battle, or at least have made it a much more difficult task for Fairfax and Cromwell. As a postscript to his account of the battle, Sprigge wrote an interesting hypothesis, which is worth quoting at length as a suggestion of what might have happened if Fairfax had lost at the battle of Naseby:

Of how great a consequence this victory was to the whole kingdom, that it may the better appear, let us take a view of it, and suppose we beheld it through the counter prospective of the contrary event, as if the enemy had had the victory, and we been beaten; and then methinks I see, not only this army, the only guardian of the kingdom, lying on a heap, furnishing the enemy with insulting trophies, but also our party in the west [Taunton] ruined, and the enemy there, like a violent torrent, carrying all before him. Methinks I see the King and Goring united, making a formidable army, and marching up to the walls of London, encouraging their soldiers, as formerly, with the promise of the spoil of that famous city. And if this success had been indulged them, and London not denied, (as who should such an army have asked it of?) what could have ensued worse or more....<sup>84</sup>





Fortunately for parliament, this was not to be. As Marston Moor had destroyed the King in the north, now Naseby finished him in the midlands. With the remnants of his army, he retired to Leicester, but left hurriedly as Fairfax, allowing him no respite, advanced upon the town on the day after the battle. On 17 June, Leicester surrendered after being fired on by the guns captured at Naseby. That same day news reached Fairfax that the King had gone towards Wales,<sup>85</sup> but the activities of the dejected monarch were of no consequence to him for the time being. Fairfax, wasting no time, had already decided that the might of the New Model Army was to be unleashed against Goring, Grenville and Hopton in the west country.



### NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup>W.C. Abbott, Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937), i, 314. On 3 July 1644, Sir William Waller had suggested the idea of a "new-modelled" army in a letter to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, see Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 5; but it was Cromwell's speech that provided the impetus for the creation of it.

<sup>2</sup>Wedgwood, King's War, pp.355-59.

<sup>3</sup>C. Holmes, The Eastern Association in the English Civil War (London, 1974), pp.196-97. See M. Ashley, The Greatness of Oliver Cromwell (New York, 1969), pp.150-51, for a note on Zouch Tate, who chaired a committee which dealt with army affairs.

<sup>4</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 118.

<sup>5</sup>S.R. Gardiner, Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660 (London, 1962), pp.287-88.

<sup>6</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 190.

<sup>7</sup>Fairfax, p.397.

<sup>8</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 120.

<sup>9</sup>Harleian Miscellany (London, 1808-13), vii, 514.  
Charles I to Henrietta Maria, 4 May 1645.

<sup>10</sup>Clarendon, iv, 7.

<sup>11</sup>Holles, p.34.

<sup>12</sup>CSP Ven., 1643-47, p.190. Alvise Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 12 May 1645.

<sup>13</sup>Fairfax, p.354.

<sup>14</sup>Commons Journal, iv, 26.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



<sup>16</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 7; and see J.W. Fortescue, History of the British Army (London, 1935), i, 212.

<sup>17</sup>B. Whitelocke, Memorials of the English Affairs (Oxford, 1853), i, 369.

<sup>18</sup>Fairfax, p.355.

<sup>19</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 13.

<sup>20</sup>Whitelocke, i, 392.

<sup>21</sup>Commons Journal, iv, 54.

<sup>22</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, pp.305-6.

<sup>23</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 8-13.

<sup>24</sup>Sprigge, p.10; and see Rushworth, IV, i, 16.

<sup>25</sup>Commons Journal, iv, 90-91.

<sup>26</sup>Young & Holmes, p.230.

<sup>27</sup>FC Civil War, i, 214-15. Commanders and Officers in Colonel Matthew Alured's Regiment to Sir Thomas Fairfax, April 1645.

<sup>28</sup>Abbott, i, 336. Oliver Cromwell to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 9 April 1645.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.338; also see C.H. Firth & G. Davies, The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army (Oxford, 1940), i, 41.

<sup>30</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.364.

<sup>31</sup>Commons Journal, iv, 77.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p.83.

<sup>33</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.338. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 8 March 1645.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p.342. Same to same, 11 March 1645.

<sup>35</sup>Abbott, i, 338.

<sup>36</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, pp.410-19.

<sup>37</sup>J. Adair, Roundhead General: A Military Biography of Sir William Waller (London, 1969), p.183.



<sup>38</sup>M. Ashley, "George Goring: Royalist Commander and Debauchee," History Today (March 1976), xxvii, 188; also see R.E. Sherwood, Civil Strife in the Midlands 1642-1651 (London, 1974), p.188.

<sup>39</sup>Commons Journal, iv, 138.

<sup>40</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, pp.476-77. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 10 May 1645.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Sprigge, p.15; Rushworth, IV, i, 25.

<sup>43</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.482. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 12 May 1645.

<sup>44</sup>Fairfax, p.355.

<sup>45</sup>FC Civil War, i, 161. Thomas Widdrington to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 18 February 1645.

<sup>46</sup>Sprigge, pp.16-17.

<sup>47</sup>A.H. Burne & P. Young, The Great Civil War: A Military History of the First Civil War 1642-1646 (London, 1959), p.196.

<sup>48</sup>Markham, p.201; also see Lucy Hutchinson, Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson (London, 1973), p.160, for details of the appointment of General Sydenham Poyntz.

<sup>49</sup>For an account of the siege at Taunton see J.R. Powell, Robert Blake: General at Sea (London, 1972), pp.48-64; also see Sprigge, pp.20-21; and Rushworth, IV, i, 31. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 15 May 1645.

<sup>50</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.493. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 15 May 1645.

<sup>51</sup>Sprigge, p.22.

<sup>52</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, pp.505-12.

<sup>53</sup>Harleian Miscellany, vii, 518. Charles I to Henrietta Maria, 14 May 1645.

<sup>54</sup>Woolrych, Battles, p.109.

<sup>55</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.522. Sir Edward Nicholas to Charles I, 25 May 1645.





<sup>56</sup>Sprigge, p.26.

<sup>57</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.534. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 28 May 1645; also see Rushworth, IV, i, 34. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 28 May 1645.

<sup>58</sup>Sprigge, pp.23-24.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>FC Civil War, i, 228. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 4 June 1645.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p.229. Gervase Lomax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 6 June 1645.

<sup>62</sup>Woolrych, Battles, pp.112-13; Sprigge, pp.26-27.

<sup>63</sup>Quoted in Sprigge, p.27. Charles I to Henrietta Maria, 8 June 1645.

<sup>64</sup>Woolrych, Battles, p.114.

<sup>65</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.580. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Oliver Cromwell, 9 June 1645.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 9 June 1645.

<sup>67</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 39.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Speaker William Lenthall, 11 June 1645.

<sup>69</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 238.

<sup>70</sup>C.H. Firth, Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier from 1642-1660 (London, 1912), pp.60-61. As Commissary-General, Ireton was in effect second in command of the cavalry.

<sup>71</sup>Sprigge, p.34.

<sup>72</sup>H.G. Tibbutt, ed., The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke: 1644-45 (London, 1963), pp.564-65.

<sup>73</sup>Sprigge, pp.34-35.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp.36-37.

<sup>75</sup>Woolrych, Battles, p.120.



<sup>76</sup>W.G. Ross, "The Battle of Naseby," English Historical Review (1888), iii, 668-78.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p.678.

<sup>78</sup>Firth, Cromwell's Army, pp.124-25.

<sup>79</sup>Sprigge, pp.38-46.

<sup>80</sup>T. May, "A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England," Select Tracts Relating to the Civil Wars in England, ed., Francis Baron Maseres, (London, 1815), i, 77.

<sup>81</sup>Sprigge, p.45.

<sup>82</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 45. Sir Thomas Fairfax to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 15 June 1645.

<sup>83</sup>Abbott, i, 359-60. Oliver Cromwell to Speaker William Lenthall, 14 June 1645.

<sup>84</sup>Sprigge, p.46.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp.52-54.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE WAR IN THE WEST AND COLLAPSE OF THE KING (1645-1646)

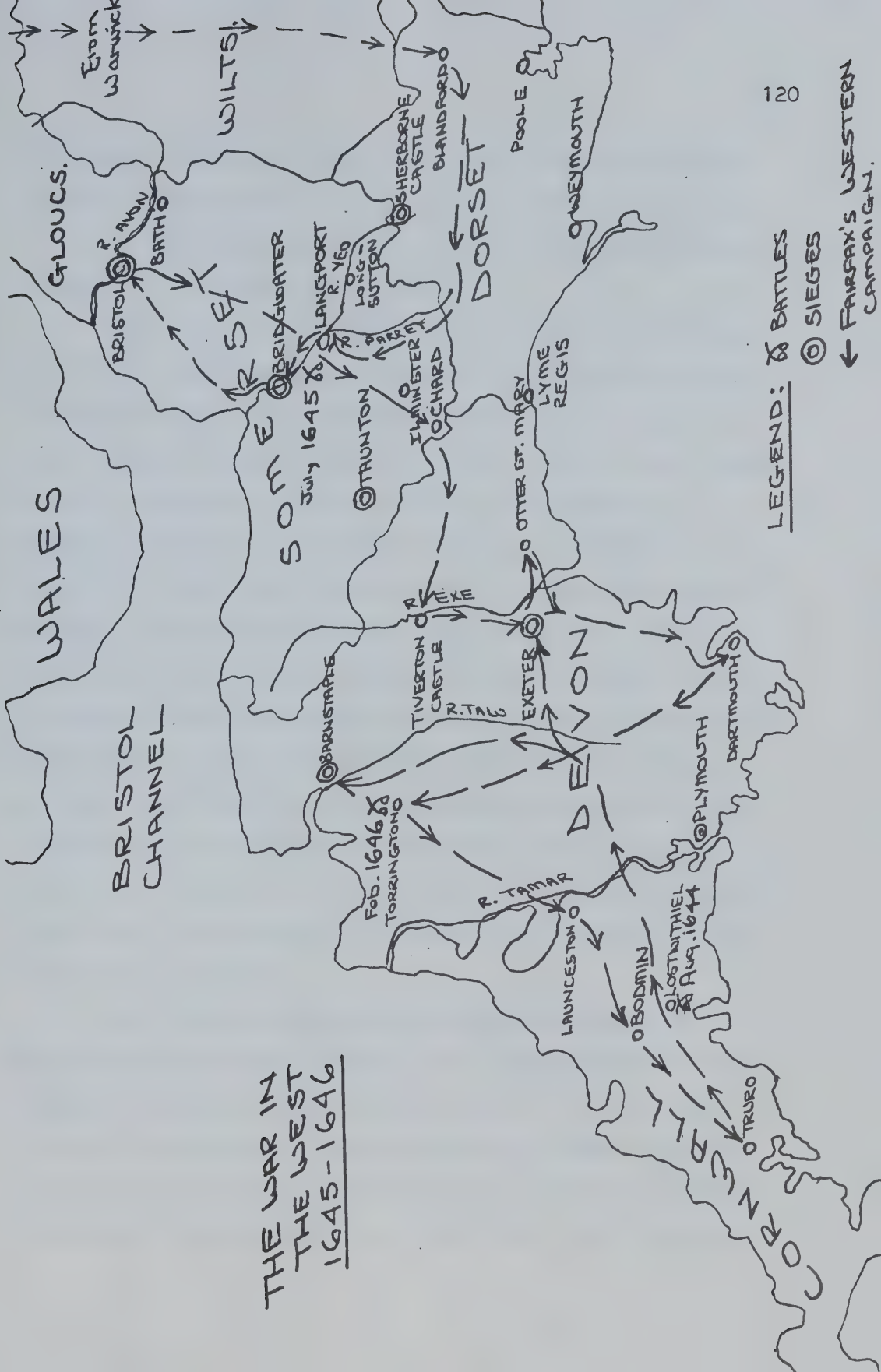
And all places, like ripe figs without pulling, fall into the eater's mouth: so disastrous are the consequences of a great battle lost.

Sir Philip Warwick

The news of the King's crushing defeat at Naseby sparked off a triumphant celebration in London, and the crowds jeered at the royalist prisoners as they were paraded through the streets towards the end of June 1645. The Committee of Both Kingdoms, however, sent off an apprehensive letter to Fairfax which, while praising him for his efforts, urged him on to even greater achievements. "We have received advertisement of the great blessing that God has given to your endeavours in so full and signal a victory against the enemy," wrote the Committee, "...and desire you to give thanks in our names to all your officers for their resolved and gallant deportment." The letter



# THE WAR IN THE WEST 1645-1646







continued, "We know we shall need say nothing to you to make what improvement you can of this great victory, which if it be effectually followed up we hope may have influence towards the finishing of the war."<sup>1</sup>

The Committee's concern was unwarranted, for Fairfax, fully understanding the military situation and exercising his independence of action, had already begun his march towards the west country when he received the letter. Leaving Warwick on 22 June, Fairfax passed through Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, and reached Blandford, Dorset on 2 July.<sup>2</sup> His intention was to raise the siege of Taunton, and then block up the royalist forces of Goring and Hopton. By moving the New Model Army deep into Dorset, Fairfax was able to maintain contact with the parliamentary navy, which brought him necessary supplies of equipment, men and money.<sup>3</sup> At Blandford, he received another letter from the Committee which gave approval to his western march, and emphasized once again that, "We leave it wholly to you, who are upon the place, to employ the army as you shall judge best."<sup>4</sup>

The King's campaign in the north-west and the midlands had ended disastrously, and consequently all that remained in his possession there now were a few strongly fortified fortresses, such as Chester and Newark, and the city of Oxford and the surrounding area. However, although Fairfax had destroyed the King's main army, the royalists



still maintained considerable forces in the west country. All of Cornwall was still held by the King. In Devon, only Plymouth, supplied from the sea, held out for parliament. The whole of Somerset was controlled by the royalists, and only the town of Taunton continued to resist its attackers. Before Fairfax began his campaign in the west, all of Dorset had been held by the royalists, except for the ports of Poole, Lyme Regis and Weymouth.<sup>5</sup>

Although it is difficult to estimate the combined strength of the royalist forces under Goring, Hopton and Grenville, it is very likely that their numbers would not be much less than those of the New Model Army. Immediately after the battle of Naseby, it is evident that Fairfax realised that he must strike in the west before the royalists had an opportunity to consolidate their forces. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the New Model Army, of which a good proportion was foot, marched a staggering distance of 132 miles in only 13 days.<sup>6</sup> This brisk demonstration of resolution and rapidity of movement did much to add to the confusion of the royalists.

However, before he could deal with the royalists, Fairfax had to face a problem of an entirely different nature. In Dorset, he encountered for the first time a host of local countrymen, armed with pitchforks, scythes and muskets, who were prepared to fight both royalists and parliamentarians to protect their goods and property.



Almost three years of war, and the continual depredations of the royalists, had forced the local population to unite in what were called "clubmen armies." Often numbering thousands, the "clubmen" were if not a threat at least a potential hindrance and embarrassment to Fairfax. No match for the New Model Army, the few skirmishes that ensued went badly for the "clubmen," and finally Fairfax received their representatives in an attempt to come to an understanding with them.

Although ostensibly a liberator, Fairfax found that the "clubmen" considered him to be as much an enemy as either Goring or Grenville. Stated in very simple terms, the "clubmen" leaders wanted both Fairfax and the royalists to cease fighting and go away. Fairfax explained to them that military necessity forced him to continue the war, for if the west country was not conquered the King would have an opportunity to bring foreign mercenaries into the country, and thus prolong the war. But, in addition, he also promised that the New Model Army would be warned to refrain, on the penalty of death, from plundering the countryside for food and other goods.<sup>7</sup> To show his good faith, he executed a soldier caught stealing at the village of Blandford.<sup>8</sup>

In his account of the war in the west, Sprigge seems to think that the "clubmen armies" were a royalist device that was calculated to confound the New Model Army



and buy time, and asserts that:

The influence the King had upon them was very palpable and notorious, and that they acted his very design; commissions were found under the prince's [Charles, Prince of Wales, Commander-in-Chief of the western royalist armies] own hand, for raising regiments of clubmen, which commissions were sent up to the parliament; and that this design was to have been set on foot in other parts, even in the associated counties, and all the parts of the kingdom, to raise a third party, (as that that the King did much rely upon, if other aid did fail,) there is but too much reason to believe....<sup>9</sup>

What Sprigge says, although interesting enough, is practically impossible to substantiate in fact, and his argument simply falls flat when one considers that there is evidence that both Rupert and Maurice clashed with "clubmen" during the summer of 1645.<sup>10</sup> The "clubmen" were merely countryfolk desperately concerned with the preservation of their goods and property, but Fairfax's concessions and guarantees to them eventually dispelled their fears and won them over, and prompted many of them to join him and serve in the New Model Army itself. However, there are a few minor isolated incidents in which parliamentary troopers fought "clubmen" as late as August 1645.<sup>11</sup> By settling the question of the "clubmen" before it became a major threat, Fairfax was now able to turn his undivided attention toward the royalists.

On 4 July, Fairfax marched west through Dorset, and then turned north into Somerset. His scouts brought him news that Goring, hearing of his approach, had drawn off





from Taunton,<sup>12</sup> and was moving his army eastwards towards the confluence of the rivers Parret and Yeo at Langport. By holding the west bank of the Yeo, Goring thought that he could prevent Fairfax from crossing, and thus give Hopton time to come out of Devon and join him. Unfortunately for Goring, and as sound as his strategy was, Fairfax came up the west bank of the Parret and threatened him in the rear. Realising that he had been out-maneuvered, Goring gave up this untenable position and moved west across the Parret. A party of Fairfax's cavalry, under Colonel Massey, collided with the retreating royalists at Ilminster, and prisoners taken in the skirmish revealed that Goring was falling back northwards to Langport.<sup>13</sup>

Goring's fatal mistake was his attempt to move west. By the time that he reached Langport on 9 July, he had lost any chance of escaping, for Fairfax followed on his heels and arrived before Langport that same night.<sup>14</sup> Goring's only opportunity to avoid a battle had been to march northwest to Bridgwater, immediately after he had abandoned the line of the Yeo. By moving west, Goring had allowed Fairfax to catch up, and fully realising the capacity of the New Model Army for forced marches, this reveals a certain lack of forethought on his part.

On the morning of the 10 July, Goring moved his army out to defend a pass which ran between the towns of Langport and Long-Sutton, while his baggage and artillery



tried to get away to Bridgwater. Although the royalist army held a good position at the neck of the pass, Fairfax could not afford to avoid a battle, as time was of the very essence to the success of his campaign. Apart from Sprigge's account, there is little documentation of the battle itself, except for letters written by Fairfax and Cromwell. It appears that after firing upon the royalists with his artillery,<sup>15</sup> Fairfax took advantage of their confusion and successfully poured his cavalry through the pass. The royalist horse was completely routed, and was pursued all the way to Bridgwater by Cromwell, as he enthusiastically reported in his letter to a friend in London.<sup>16</sup>

This defeat utterly destroyed Goring's field force. The remnants scattered throughout the countryside, and Goring himself fled to Barnstaple, where he found temporary solace in drink and self-pity. In an attempt to shift the blame onto his subordinates, he wrote to a friend and tried to explain how the defeat was the fault of others, and that he was being used as a scapegoat:

This war is ended with more loss to me than any other body, for I hear the Prince [of Wales] is displeased with me for the coming away of those officers that did it without my knowledge, and I have now my lameness so much renewed, that I cannot come to clear myself....<sup>17</sup>

In November 1645, Goring left for France on the pretext of recruiting mercenaries. He had not returned at the time of the execution of Charles I over three years



later!<sup>18</sup>

Fairfax considered the victory at Langport to be one of his greatest achievements, as he had smashed the bulk of the royalists' western army and reduced their strength to a number of fortified towns and strongholds. On the day after the battle, he wrote to his father from his camp, just two miles south of Bridgwater:

I have taken this occasion to let your lordship know God's great goodness to us in defeating General Goring's army; 2,000 prisoners are taken, two pieces of ordnance, many arms and colours, both of horse and foot, but not many slain. His horse that got off, is gone towards Cornwall, and some foot to Bristol. It pleased God to give them this blow in good season...so as we cannot esteem this mercy less, all things considered, than that of Naseby fight....<sup>19</sup>

Fairfax now had to decide whether to plunge into Devon, and pursue the disordered royalists, or whether to consolidate his position in Somerset by advancing upon the royalist-held towns. Sensibly, he chose the latter. Well aware of what had happened to Essex's army at Lostwithiel, in Cornwall, in the summer of 1644, he decided to secure his rear before continuing west.<sup>20</sup> This strategy would maintain his connections with the east, and at the same time completely block up the royalists in the Cornish peninsula. Fairfax could only hope that he would be able to reduce the royalist towns before the King had an opportunity to land French and Irish mercenaries in Cornwall and Devon, and for this reason he immediately moved the



New Model Army to Bridgwater.

The town of Bridgwater presented Fairfax with a very difficult task. Although garrisoned by only 1,800 royalist troops,<sup>21</sup> of which a good number were Welsh levies,<sup>22</sup> the strength of the town lay in its position and defences. Built astride the river Parret, Bridgwater was protected by formidable fortifications. Fairfax now found himself in the same position as the marquis of Newcastle had been at Hull two years before. He had a vast numerical superiority, but in order to attack, he would have to cross a river and then advance across level ground that provided absolutely no cover.<sup>23</sup>

Nine valuable days passed as the parliamentary leaders deliberated over what action to take, but the New Model Army received a well-earned rest. The importance of capturing the town was not lost on Fairfax, and in a letter to his father he outlined the situation and voiced his impatience:

Since the last fight we have only settled our quarters about Bridgwater, as necessary before we enter into action again, to give some rest to the soldiers, who have extreme hard duties in marches and service. This town is of greater consequence, as we conceive, than any in the western parts; for if we have it, we shall garrison in a line which will reach from Severn's mouth to the South Sea, and so divide Devonshire and Cornwall, where their chief force is driven. We intend presently, God willing, either to storm or block it up, that the rest of the army may be at liberty to go after Goring, or where there is most need. I hope we shall carry this place if we storm it. All things are preparing for it....<sup>24</sup>





At a council of war, held on 19 July, it was decided that Bridgwater must be stormed. During the period of waiting, General Hammond, the General of the Ordnance, had had thirty wooden bridges constructed.<sup>25</sup> These were now used to get the parliamentary troops across the river. On the morning of the 21st, Fairfax attacked. Colonel Weldon, who had rejoined the army from Taunton, made a false attack on the west side of the town. The ruse succeeded, and as the royalists responded to Weldon's advance, Fairfax launched the bulk of the army on the east side. After furious fighting, the royalists retreated to the west side, but only after firing the half that the parliamentarians had captured.

On 22 July, Fairfax summoned the royalist governor, Mr. Edmund Wyndham, and asked him to surrender. This stop in the fighting gave Fairfax a chance to put out the fires, and the bulk of the parliamentary foot was put to work to achieve this. Surprisingly, considering his plight, Wyndham refused to surrender, and Fairfax, showing that he was determined to take the town at all costs, requested that all women and children come out, an action which presaged total destruction.<sup>26</sup> That same day, Fairfax brought up the artillery, and began to fire upon the west side. By the 23rd, Wyndham had endured enough, and sent to Fairfax a list of his terms. Fairfax replied that terms were out of the question, but he would guarantee the defenders their lives. That afternoon Bridgwater surrendered.



In effect, the capture of Bridgwater sealed the fate of the western royalist forces. Trapped in Cornwall and Devon, their only hope lay in support from outside the country. The King's recruiting drive in the south of Wales was to no avail, as the parliamentary navy patrolled the length of the Bristol Channel, and guarded the northern shores of Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. "Indeed the taking of Bridgwater," wrote Clarendon, "could not but make great impressions upon the King to think that he was betrayed, and consequently not to know whom to trust, and it was a matter of amazement to all men."<sup>27</sup> Charles had considered that the town was impregnable, and felt that Wyndham had acted treacherously by surrendering in so short a time. However, the facts of the matter exonerate Wyndham, and show that he had done all in his power to resist the parliamentarians.

By capturing Bridgwater, Fairfax had now succeeded in securing a string of forts from Lyme Regis through Taunton, Langport and Bridgwater itself. In addition, the town yielded many arms, 44 guns and 44 barrels of gunpowder.<sup>28</sup> "Now we shall, in a day or two, undertake some other business," wrote Fairfax to his father, "either towards Bath and Bristol, or towards Goring in Cornwall; the latter seems fittest to be undertaken. Forces from France and Ireland may readily join with him there."<sup>29</sup> Before a decision was made as to where to move the New Model Army next, Fairfax rewarded his troops by paying each common soldier three



shillings from money raised from the sale of royalist valuables and goods that had been stored in Bridgwater for safekeeping.<sup>30</sup> This demonstration of his generosity earned him the everlasting admiration and respect of the parliamentary army.

On 25 July, a council of war was held at which it was resolved that Bath and Sherborne Castle would be the next objectives of the parliamentary campaign.<sup>31</sup> In spite of his intimation to his father that the pursuit of Goring "seems fittest to be undertaken," Fairfax had reconsidered the situation and decided upon another course of action. Between the New Model Army and the King's headquarters at Oxford, the royalists held only Bristol, Bath and Sherborne Castle. The taking of Bristol, which was strongly fortified and garrisoned, and under the command of Rupert, would present a formidable task, but Bath and Sherborne Castle would, in all probability, surrender quickly. To achieve this, Fairfax sent Colonel Pickering to Sherborne Castle, and Colonels Rich and Okey to Bath.<sup>32</sup> On 29 July, Rich and Okey attacked Bath. After initial success in repelling Rich's troops, the royalists were surprised by a night attack made by Okey's dragoons which forced them to give up the bridge and gate. On the morning of the 30th, the royalists surrendered.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Bath, Sherborne Castle held out stubbornly, and both Fairfax and Cromwell had to go there and see why



Pickering was meeting with little success. While Fairfax remained at Sherborne Castle, Cromwell took a part of the army back into the west of Wiltshire to deal with another rising of "clubmen" gangs.<sup>34</sup> The governor of Sherborne Castle, Sir Lewis Dyves, wrote to Fairfax and made it very clear that he would defend his post to the bitter end,<sup>35</sup> and consequently the parliamentary forces were ordered to begin a long and costly siege. Not expecting such fierce resistance, Pickering had only taken along a small number of cannon, and these appeared to be unable to breach the walls. By 5 August, Cromwell had rejoined Fairfax, and the two now discussed a means of capturing the castle. Fairfax, exasperated and impatient, informed his father of the problem that he faced, and a possible method of solving it:

We find nothing more difficult than sieges, where things are not provided for that work. Necessity and reason now puts us upon that way; for no army, God be thanked, now for the present is like to keep the field against us. We shall neglect half our work if we leave Sherborne untaken; but in a few days we hope, by God's assistance, to force it...We are making mines, which I hope in a few days will be finished....<sup>36</sup>

For two weeks, the parliamentary soldiers worked at digging the mines, while the cannon concentrated their fire on a central tower in the walls. On 15 August, and as the mines were near completion, the battered tower suddenly collapsed into a heap of rubble. Fairfax immediately ordered an attack, and the parliamentary troops successfully forced an entry into the castle.<sup>37</sup> That afternoon Dyves surrendered





Sherborne Castle to Fairfax, and thus Bristol remained the sole possession of the King in Somerset.

The capture of Sherborne Castle was timely, for now Fairfax was finally able to march on Bristol after an unexpected loss of two weeks. Although he was confident that the royalists were unable to take the field against him, for the time being, he was unaware that Hopton was quite hopeful that royalist prospects were about to brighten in the west. "We have just had a cheerful letter from Lord Hopton. He has 6,000 Cornish foot well armed, and is on his march to join with the 3,000 before Plymouth," wrote George Lord Digby to the marquis of Ormonde, in Ireland. "When they are joined, he will, he says, make Fairfax as weary of the west as Essex was last year."<sup>38</sup>

While Hopton prepared to come out of Cornwall, Fairfax advanced upon Bristol. "Upon serious debate on the consequence of affairs, we marched to Bristol with the army, else the good success God has given us in Somersetshire might have been to little purpose," he wrote to his father. "We have shut Prince Rupert, with all his horse, up in Bristol; the plague is much there."<sup>39</sup>

It is known that the summer of 1645 was one of extremely severe plague throughout all of England,<sup>40</sup> and Fairfax was greatly concerned with the welfare of his army. But Sprigge reports that after making the decision to invest Bristol, Fairfax said to his officers, "Our judgments lead



us to make Bristol our next design...as for the sickness, let us trust God with the army, who will be as ready to protect us in the siege from infection, as in the field from the bullet."<sup>41</sup>

Upon hearing of Fairfax's intention to besiege Bristol, Rupert immediately began his preparations to resist the parliamentary army. The royalist horse devastated the area around the city, burning the villages and fields, and scattering the populace. Only the arrival of the New Model Army, on 25 August, put a stop to this wanton destruction.<sup>42</sup> The royalist horse did its job well, and achieved Rupert's objective of denying Fairfax's army a source of food and shelter in the surrounding countryside. However, Rupert's actions also did much to earn him the undying hatred of the local countryfolk, and encouraged many of them openly to assist Fairfax in his endeavours.

Throughout the month of July 1645, Rupert had strengthened the fortifications of Bristol, and in spite of the presence of the plague, the city was quite capable of withstanding a lengthy siege. The garrison numbered between three and four thousand men,<sup>43</sup> a good proportion of which had arrived with Rupert. Indeed, the royalists were extremely confident that Rupert would be able to hold out until Hopton arrived from Cornwall. "I hear that Sir Thomas Fairfax is very confident that he will take Bristol, with the help of the 6,000 club-men of Somerset and



Gloucester who assist him," wrote Secretary Nicholas to the King. "But Prince Rupert, by his frequent sallies, does so disorder the rebels, as that some of his foot begin already to run away."<sup>44</sup> It seems evident that Nicholas exaggerated the strength of the "clubmen," and the purpose and effect of Rupert's cavalry attacks. It is more likely that Rupert's forays were designed not so much to hinder Fairfax's army, as much as they were deliberate attempts to escape from the predicament in which he found himself. But, unable to get away, he eventually resigned himself to the fact that he would have to defend Bristol, until either Hopton arrived with help or surrender became inevitable.

At the beginning of the siege, Fairfax had ordered Admiral Moulton, commander of the parliamentary fleet in the Bristol Channel, to detach a part of his force and send it to the mouth of the river Avon, which flowed past the south side of the city.<sup>45</sup> This prevented the royalists from receiving reinforcements and supplies, and blocked up their only means of escape. The parliamentary army spent the remaining days of an unusually wet August in resisting royalist attempts to get out, and occasionally firing upon the walls of the city.

Fairfax, although conscious of the time factor, was prepared to wait and see what Rupert would do. Wishing to avoid bloodshed as much as possible, he refrained from hurling his army at the walls of Bristol, and decided to





appeal to Rupert personally. On 4 September, Fairfax wrote a long letter in which he revealed the reasons why he had taken up arms against the King, and why he found it necessary to defeat the royalists in battle before the crown could be reconciled to parliament:

Sir, the crown of England is and will be where it ought to be, we fight to maintain it there. But the King, misled by evil counsellors, or through a seduced heart, has left his parliament and his people (under God the best assurance of his crown and family). The maintenance of this schism is the ground of this unhappy war on your part. And what sad effects it has produced in the three kingdoms is visible to all men...and to bring those wicked instruments to justice that have misled him is a principal ground of our fighting. Sir, if God makes this clear to you, as He has to us, I doubt not but He will give you a heart to deliver this place...and if upon such conviction you should surrender it, and save the loss of blood or hazard of spoiling such a city, it would be an occasion glorious in itself...and if this be hid from your eyes...let all England judge whether the burning of its towns, ruining of its cities, and destroying of its people, be a good requital from a person of your family which has had the prayers, tears, purses and blood of its parliament and people....<sup>46</sup>

This letter reveals a certain seductive cleverness on the part of Fairfax. He outlines his convictions, appeals to Rupert's moral responsibility by threatening him with the consequences of allowing Bristol to be destroyed "-let all England judge-" and then caps it all by making a personal appeal to Rupert, by reminding him of the money spent and the Englishmen killed in the defense of his father's electorship in the Palatinate.<sup>47</sup>

The impact of the letter was not lost upon Rupert.





Knowing full well that Fairfax would not hesitate to storm the city if he was forced to, he wrote back that same day, and asked if he could consult with the King before making a decision.<sup>48</sup> Seeing through Rupert's ploy to gain time, Fairfax replied, on 6 September, that discussion was out of the question. "I cannot give way to nor admit of so much delay," he wrote, "I cannot but understand your intention not to surrender without his majesty's consent. Yet, because it is but implicit, I send again to know more clearly if you have any more positive answer to give me."<sup>49</sup> The next day Rupert offered terms, but Fairfax refused them as "some things are doubtfully expressed; other things inconsistent with the duty I owe to them I serve."<sup>50</sup> After three more days had passed, Fairfax realised that his appeal had failed, and gave the order for the parliamentary army to attack the city.

At two o'clock on the morning of the 10 September, the parliamentary army was launched against the forts that ringed the city. After vicious fighting, and much hand-to-hand combat, the parliamentarians succeeded in capturing them. In his desperation at seeing the city being lost so quickly, Rupert began to fire the buildings, and sent a messenger to Fairfax requesting that they negotiate. Fairfax agreed to this, but also ordered Rupert to quench the fires first.<sup>51</sup> On 11 September, and after having accepted Fairfax's terms, Rupert's forces began to leave



the city. Although the articles of surrender stipulated that the royalist army must be disarmed, Fairfax allowed Rupert to keep 1,000 muskets in order to protect himself from the countryfolk.<sup>52</sup>

For Rupert this was the end of his participation in the war, and for the western royalist army it was a tremendous setback, as it had now lost its last port and arsenal. The parliamentarians entered the city that same day, and at Fairfax's request, Cromwell wrote a detailed report of the action to Speaker Lenthall in London, in which he described how the New Model Army had endured the siege and stormed the city with a loss of less than two hundred men. "I hear but one man has died of the plague in all our army," he added, "although we have quartered amongst and in the midst of infected persons and places."<sup>53</sup>

The King was mortified when he received the news of the fall of Bristol, and wrote a letter to Rupert in which he chastised him for his failure:

Though the loss of Bristol be a great blow to me, yet your surrendering it as you did is of so much affliction to me, that it makes me forget not only the consideration of that place, but is likewise the greatest trial of my constancy that has yet befallen me...I have so much to say that I will say no more of it, lest rashness of judgement be laid to my charge; only I must remind you of your letter of the 12th of August, whereby you assured me that (if no mutiny happened) you would keep Bristol for four months; did you keep it for four days? Was there anything like mutiny? More questions might be asked; but now, I confess, to little purpose....<sup>54</sup>



The King's anger and astonishment stemmed from the fact that his advisers had been providing him with a distorted view of the situation. As late as 4 September, Nicholas wrote to the King, and told him that, "Prince Rupert has made many sallies out of Bristol, wherein he has killed and taken a number of the rebels, and so disheartened them, as it is believed Fairfax will not abide there many days."<sup>55</sup> A letter written on the same date, from George Lord Digby to Henry Lord Jermyn, gives news of Fairfax's activities around Bristol, "which place will be likely to destroy his army, and so leave the Prince of Wales in the west and us in Wales free to make levies."<sup>56</sup> This inflation and exaggeration of Rupert's capabilities and royalist successes made the loss of the city appear all the worse to the irate King.

Despite their reverses in 1644 and 1645, the royalists seem to have still sustained a consistent, but self-deceptive, overconfidence. Ignoring the fact that the New Model Army remained undefeated in the field and had captured every town it had besieged, the royalists continued to underestimate the ability of Fairfax, and blinkered themselves to the realisation that he had almost beaten them completely. The "monstrous intelligence" of the fall of Bristol, as Clarendon refers to it,<sup>57</sup> now appears to have had a sobering effect. Fairfax certainly noticed this, and informed his father of the consequences of the latest catastrophe for the royalist



army:

By the good providence of God we are now possessed of Bristol, which was rendered, September 11th, upon these enclosed conditions, after a fierce and resolute storm...The enemy seems much dejected since the taking of this town, and I think the Prince [Rupert] would be glad of a pass to go into France. I believe I shall hear from him shortly to that purpose, if he would not have it so public as to desire it of the Parliament, but rather from me ...I think it would be happy for the kingdom if he would go out of it....<sup>58</sup>

As it happened, Rupert did not apply to either Fairfax or parliament for a pass, but was immediately sacked by his uncle. The King wrote to Rupert's brother, Maurice, and told him that Rupert's "unhandsome quitting of the castle and fort of Bristol has forced me to put him off those commands in my army, and I have sent him a pass to go beyond the seas."<sup>59</sup> However, Rupert remained in England, for the time being, and tried to reconcile himself to the King.

On 15 September, Fairfax and Cromwell entered the city of Bristol. Fearing the plague, Fairfax was anxious to get away as soon as possible, and after appointing Skippon governor, and providing him with a garrison of 1,000 men,<sup>60</sup> he rapidly moved the army away from the city in a south-westerly direction.

The rigours of the campaign were beginning to tell upon Fairfax, and on 17 September he went to Bath, where he spent five days recuperating. Even after this brief respite, he remained in ill-health, and it must have





crossed his mind that he had been exposed to the plague at Bristol. "I am exceedingly troubled with rheumatism," he wrote to his father from Chard, in Somerset, on 8 October, "and a benumbing coldness in my head, legs and arms, especially on that side I had my hurts."<sup>61</sup> Presumably, he was suffering from a recurring bout of the fever that he had contracted in his youth in the Low Countries, which was aggravated by the numerous wounds that he had received in the war. He seems to have improved after this date, as this is the only occasion on which he complains about the state of his health.

By 14 October, the New Model Army had crossed into Devon, and dispirited as they were, the royalists fell back at Fairfax's approach. In quick succession, fortified houses and castles surrendered without a fight. On 19 October, Tiverton Castle fell to the parliamentarians, and the New Model Army moved south to invest Exeter. At this point, it seems that Fairfax was fully prepared to attack Exeter before the winter set in, but when he reached the environs of the city, a sudden and strange malady struck at the parliamentary army.

The disease, presumably the plague, ravaged the troops throughout the month of November, and only seems to have begun to dissipate by the first week of December.<sup>62</sup> Fairfax made his headquarters at Ottery St. Mary, to the east of Exeter, and waited for the epidemic to subside and



the snow to disappear. His secretary, John Rushworth, wrote to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax in London. "The army is sickly, many die daily, the disease is infectious, the quarters bare, and truly, I fear, a great mortality will ensue for want of accomodation, to the foot especially."<sup>63</sup> By the beginning of December, the disease appeared to have run its course through the exhausted parliamentary army, but the men continued to suffer from a lack of supplies and the severity of the weather. "The extreme coldness of the weather, and want of clothes, makes us act slower," wrote Fairfax, on 19 December. "There is an infectious fever in our quarters, but the countrymen rather than the soldiers die of it."<sup>64</sup>

Fairfax's predicament did not go unnoticed by the royalists, and in a letter to a friend, concerning the actions of the parliamentarians around Exeter, Lord Hopton remarked that "their army is being much wasted with the sickness."<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the only cheerful events to occur during this dreary winter were when Fairfax was rewarded by the two Houses for his services of the past year. On 14 November, he received a jewel, valued at 800l., from both the Lords and Commons for his victory at Naseby.<sup>66</sup> Then, on 1 December, the Commons resolved that an estate worth 5,000l. a year "be bestowed, granted and settled upon Sir Thomas Fairfax, General, and his heirs forever...in acknowledgment of his many great and faithful services to the kingdom."<sup>67</sup>



With the coming of the new year, Fairfax began his plans to end the war in the west. At the end of December 1645, he had been reinforced with men and supplies,<sup>68</sup> and but for the weather was ready to strike. He knew full well that Hopton would expect him to fall upon Exeter at the earliest opportunity, and for this reason he decided against it. Apart from all of Cornwall, the royalists held only Barnstaple, Exeter and Dartmouth in Devon. The parliamentary garrison of Plymouth still refused to surrender, having resisted the besiegers for well over a year, and Fairfax reasoned that a surprise attack on Dartmouth would relieve the pressure on the beleaguered port.

Although it was during the depths of winter, Fairfax moved his army to Dartmouth, leaving a small force to watch Exeter. On 19 January 1646, the parliamentary army stormed Dartmouth. Attacking under the cover of night, Fairfax assaulted the town on three sides simultaneously, and on the morning of the 20th Dartmouth surrendered.<sup>69</sup> He wrote a vivid account of the action to both Houses,<sup>70</sup> and Rushworth remarked to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, "that this was one of the greatest businesses the general has yet undertaken."<sup>71</sup> The capture of Dartmouth achieved its purpose, for the royalists, confused by Fairfax's unorthodox tactics, drew off from Plymouth at the news of his coming, and moved north to join Hopton.

Fairfax's victories were not the only problem that





faced the royalists, for as the end neared, the senior commanders began to squabble and bicker among themselves. Grenville and Hopton argued bitterly over the question of command, and after the Prince of Wales intervened, Grenville gave up the fight and left the country.<sup>72</sup> Hopton, in the meantime, had moved into north Devon with about 5,000 men. He had given up any hope of relieving Exeter, but was determined to try to turn Fairfax's flank, as he moved north-west from Dartmouth.<sup>73</sup> By the first week of February, Hopton had barricaded himself in the town of Torrington, and on the 16th Fairfax's army arrived.

The battle of Torrington, the last that Fairfax fought in the first Civil War, crushed the last remnants of royalist power in the west. Although only about 15,000 men were engaged in the fight, Fairfax's letter to Speaker Lenthall reveals that it was a furious affair. The parliamentarians had to rush the barricades of the town, and much of the fighting entailed push of pike and clubbing with muskets.<sup>74</sup> Fairfax himself was involved in the actual fighting, and had a narrow escape after the battle was over, when a tremendous explosion blew up part of the town:

It was as hot service as any has been since our coming forth; the enemy showed more resolution than ever; I saw them after we were come into the town, their magazine, which lay in the church, which was almost eighty barrels of powder, took fire, and blew up all the church; timber, stones and sheets of lead showering down as hail on all parts of the town. I believe there were 200 of the enemy prisoners, and some of our own men blown up, and





buried in the ruins of the church. I must acknowledge God's great mercy to me, and some others that stood where great webs of lead fell thickest, yet, praised be God, no man hurt; only a horse of a gentleman of the Life Guard, that stood by me, killed....<sup>75</sup>

Allowing the royalists no respite, Fairfax immediately plunged into Cornwall and pursued Hopton's fleeing army. Launceston fell on 25 February, and Bodmin on 2 March. Not willing to risk another battle, Hopton continued to retreat, until he reached Truro on 3 March. The Prince of Wales and most courtiers left for the Scilly Isles, but Hopton waited to receive Fairfax.<sup>76</sup>

On 5 March, Fairfax wrote to Hopton and offered him terms, which simply stated that those who wished to go abroad might do so, but those who remained must yield their arms. "I must acknowledge much kindness from you," Hopton replied, "and a very Christian consideration of sparing blood." He was willing to accept terms for his army, he added, but his conscience forced him to go abroad, as he could not find it in himself to renounce his allegiance to the King.<sup>77</sup>

"We have almost put a period to the Western war, there remaining now no body of an army in the field against us," Fairfax wrote to his father. "Being advanced as far as Truro, we had the enemy in an isthmus of land, where they could not escape." Hopton's quick surrender seems to have exceeded Fairfax's expectations. "I hope the rest of the towns will come in in good season," he continued, for "the



breaking of these forces thus, we esteem a great mercy, considering they had 4,500 horse, and that we must have been put to many straits and some hazard, if we had fought with them."<sup>78</sup>

With Hopton's surrender, all that remained of the royalists in the west country were the garrisons of Barnstaple and Exeter. The New Model Army now retraced its steps back into Devon, and proceeded to invest the last royalist strongholds. Fairfax left the army, now that there was no need for urgency, and went down to Plymouth on 26 March. Here he praised the stout defenders, and in turn was thanked for coming to their aid.<sup>79</sup>

On his return to the army, he found that both royalist towns were reluctant to surrender, but were willing to discuss terms. Indeed, Fairfax wanted to settle the west country, as he was well aware that his army would be needed at Oxford, where the King and Rupert had retreated. As always, he informed his father of his intentions. "A treaty is begun for the surrendering of Exeter...we shall in a few days march the whole army eastwards," he wrote. "I have already sent Commissary-General Ireton, with three regiments of horse and one of dragoons, towards Oxford, to join with the rest that are there."<sup>80</sup>

On 9 April, Exeter surrendered, and its disarmed garrison marched out the next day.<sup>81</sup> "I am going to Barnstaple, which, I have good hopes, will come in on a



summons," wrote Fairfax. "Then the western war, I trust in the Lord, is finished."<sup>82</sup> Three days later the western war ended, as the Governor of Barnstaple agreed to terms and surrendered.<sup>83</sup>

As the west country was now finally subdued, Fairfax gave orders for the army to march to Oxford, where it arrived on 2 May. The King had already escaped to the Scots at Newark, but Rupert remained, and on 5 May he applied to Fairfax for a pass to leave the country. Not knowing what "the pleasure of parliament be concerning him," Fairfax referred his request to Speaker Lenthall.<sup>84</sup> When Oxford surrendered, Rupert and his brother, Maurice, were both allowed to leave the country, and many were glad to see them go.<sup>85</sup>

As Oxford was extremely well-fortified, Fairfax began to prepare for a lengthy siege, and sent to London for extra guns and siege tools. He was in earnest to finish the war, as his health was beginning to fail him again, and he was constantly crippled with the stone.<sup>86</sup> While the siege progressed, Fairfax attempted to negotiate with the royalist governor, Sir Thomas Glemham, the man who had defended York against Lord Fairfax, Manchester and Leven two years before.<sup>87</sup> By 30 May, Glemham had agreed to discuss terms, but it took more than three weeks to arrive at a settlement. Eventually, on 24 June 1646, Oxford surrendered, and the garrison came out. Fairfax was very gratified that Glemham



had seen reason, for only very reluctantly would he have stormed such a beautiful city and famous seat of learning. When the parliamentary army occupied the city the next day, Fairfax immediately placed a guard on the Bodleian library to protect it from the common soldiery.<sup>88</sup>

The surrender of Oxford signalled the end of the first Civil War, and relieved of his labours, Fairfax planned to go to Bath, where he hoped to repair his broken health. "The Lord still follows us with his mercies. Oh, that we could be truly thankful to Him for them!" he wrote characteristically to his father, "and in the meantime I shall endeavour to keep together, and in good order, the army, and shall wait on the Lord, to see what He shall do for us."<sup>89</sup>





## NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, pp.594-95. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 15 June 1645.

<sup>2</sup>Sprigge, p.333

<sup>3</sup>CSP Dom., 1645-47, p.3. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 2 July 1645.

<sup>4</sup>CSP Dom., 1644-45, p.611. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 25 June 1645.

<sup>5</sup>Sprigge, pp.xi-xvi.

<sup>6</sup>Markham, p.231.

<sup>7</sup>A.R. Bayley, The Civil War in Dorset 1642-1660 (Taunton, 1910), pp.259-66; Whitelocke, i, 467-68; Rushworth, IV, i, 53. Sir Thomas Fairfax to the "Clubmen," undated, 1645.

<sup>8</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 265.

<sup>9</sup>Sprigge, p.90.

<sup>10</sup>Bayley, p.261.

<sup>11</sup>Sprigge, pp.86-89.

<sup>12</sup>HMC Portland, i, 232. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Speaker William Lenthall, 6 July 1645.

<sup>13</sup>Sprigge, p.67.

<sup>14</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, ii, 270.

<sup>15</sup>Markham, p.236.

<sup>16</sup>Abbott, i, 364-66. Oliver Cromwell to "a worthy member of the House of Commons," 11 July 1645; Sprigge, pp.72-74.



<sup>17</sup>FC Civil War, i, 236-37. George Lord Goring to Sir Constantine Huygens, 22 July 1645.

<sup>18</sup>M. Ashley, "George Goring," p.192.

<sup>19</sup>FC Civil War, i, 235. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 11 July 1645.

<sup>20</sup>In the summer of 1644, the earl of Essex's campaign in the west country had ended in disaster when his entire army was trapped and captured at Lostwithiel, in Cornwall. After relieving Gloucester, Essex had been foolish enough to overextend his lines of communication. He abandoned his army and escaped by sea.

<sup>21</sup>Markham, p.238.

<sup>22</sup>Mercurius Civicus; London's Intelligencer or, Truth Impartially related from Thence to the Whole Kingdom, to prevent Misinformation (London, 11 May 1643 -10 December 1646), cxlii, 1001-2.

<sup>23</sup>Sprigge, pp.76-77.

<sup>24</sup>FC Civil War, i, 239. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 16 July 1645.

<sup>25</sup>Markham, p.239.

<sup>26</sup>HMC Portland, i, 235. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Edmund Wyndham, 22 July 1645; Sprigge, pp.78-79.

<sup>27</sup>Clarendon, iv, 73.

<sup>28</sup>M. Coate, Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum 1642-1660 (Truro, Cornwall, 1963), p.179.

<sup>29</sup>FC Civil War, i, 240. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 24 July 1645.

<sup>30</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 59.

<sup>31</sup>Sprigge, p.83.

<sup>32</sup>Markham, p.241.

<sup>33</sup>J. Wroughton, The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset (1642-1650) (Bath, Somerset, 1973), pp.97-100.

<sup>34</sup>FC Civil War, i, 244-45. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 4 August 1645.



<sup>35</sup>British Library, Sloane MS, 1519, f.125. Sir Lewis Dyves to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 6 August 1645.

<sup>36</sup>FC Civil War, i, 246-47. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, undated, 1645.

<sup>37</sup>Sprigge, pp.94-96.

<sup>38</sup>CSP Ire., 1633-47, p.408. George Lord Digby to the marquis of Ormonde, 2 August 1645.

<sup>39</sup>FC Civil War, i, 248-49. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 23 August 1645.

<sup>40</sup>C. Creighton, A History of Epidemics in Britain (London, 1965), p.557.

<sup>41</sup>Quoted in Sprigge, p.98.

<sup>42</sup>Markham, p.247.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.246.

<sup>44</sup>CSP Dom., 1645-47, pp.99-100. Sir Edward Nicholas to the King, 31 August 1645.

<sup>45</sup>Sprigge, p.99.

<sup>46</sup>British Library, Additional MS, 12,520, ff.73-75. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Prince Rupert, 4 September 1645.

<sup>47</sup>In 1618, Frederick Elector Palatine, son-in-law of James I, accepted the crown of Bohemia. He lost it at the battle of The White Mountain when he was defeated by the forces of the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand II. Subsequently, he lost his electorship as a result of a Spanish invasion of the Palatinate. Many Englishmen and Scots were hired to fight in his cause, and among those killed were two uncles of Sir Thomas Fairfax.

<sup>48</sup>British Library, Egerton MS, 2711, ff.84-85. Prince Rupert to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 4 September 1645.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Prince Rupert, 4 September 1645.

<sup>50</sup>Quoted in Sprigge, p.114.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp.118-19.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p.122



<sup>53</sup>Abbott, i, 374-78. Oliver Cromwell to Speaker William Lenthall, 14 September 1645.

<sup>54</sup>Petrie, p.158. Charles I to Prince Rupert, undated, 1645.

<sup>55</sup>CSP Dom., 1645-47, pp.110-11. Sir Edward Nicholas to the King, 4 September 1645.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp.111-12. George Lord Digby to Henry Lord Jermyn, 4 September 1645.

<sup>57</sup>Clarendon, iv, 93.

<sup>58</sup>FC Civil War, i, 249-50. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 12 September 1645.

<sup>59</sup>Petrie, p.158. Charles I to Prince Maurice, 20 September 1645.

<sup>60</sup>Markham, p.253; also see CSP Dom., 1645-47, pp. 144-45. Sir Edward Nicholas to the King, 18 September 1645.

<sup>61</sup>FC Civil War, i, 250-51. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 8 October 1645.

<sup>62</sup>Sprigge, pp.167-69.

<sup>63</sup>FC Civil War, i, 261. John Rushworth to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 3 December 1645.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp.264-65. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 19 December 1645.

<sup>65</sup>HMC Portland, i, 322. Ralph Lord Hopton to Sir Baynham Throckmorton, 27 November 1645.

<sup>66</sup>Commons Journal, iv, 348. Sir Thomas Fairfax to the House of Commons, 14 November 1645.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p.360.

<sup>68</sup>CSP Dom., 1645-47, pp.283-84. Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 29 December 1645.

<sup>69</sup>Sprigge, pp.179-85.

<sup>70</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 97-98. Sir Thomas Fairfax to the Houses of Lords and Commons, 20 January 1646.





<sup>71</sup>FC Civil War, i, 277-78. John Rushworth to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 20 January 1646.

<sup>72</sup>Markham, p.262.

<sup>73</sup>Wedgwood, King's War, p.505.

<sup>74</sup>Rushworth, IV, i, 99-103. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Speaker William Lenthall, 19 February 1646.

<sup>75</sup>FC Civil War, i, 285. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 18 February 1646.

<sup>76</sup>F.T.R. Edgar, Sir Ralph Hopton: The King's Man in the West (1642-1652) (Oxford, 1968), p.183.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp.184-85. Sir Ralph Hopton to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 8 March 1646.

<sup>78</sup>FC Civil War, i, 288. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 15 March 1646.

<sup>79</sup>Markham, pp.267-68.

<sup>80</sup>FC Civil War, i, 289. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 4 April 1646.

<sup>81</sup>CSP Dom., 1645-47, pp.416-17; also see E.A. Andriette, Devon and Exeter in the Civil War (Newton Abbot, Devon, 1971), pp.165-66.

<sup>82</sup>FC Civil War, i, 290, Sir Thomas Fairfax to Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 9 April 1646.

<sup>83</sup>CSP Dom., 1645-47, pp.409-10; also see R.W. Cotton, Barnstaple and the Northern Part of Devonshire during the Great Civil War 1642-1646 (London, 1889), pp.510-18.

<sup>84</sup>Tanner MS, lix, f.125. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Speaker William Lenthall, 5 May 1646.

<sup>85</sup>See F.J. Varley, The Siege of Oxford: An Account of Oxford during the Civil War, 1642-46 (Oxford, 1932), p.147, for the departure of the Princes Rupert and Maurice.

<sup>86</sup>Markham, p.269.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p.271.



<sup>89</sup>FC Civil War, i, 297-98. Sir Thomas Fairfax to  
Ferdinando Lord Fairfax, 23 July 1646.



## EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe rings,  
Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,  
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze  
And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings,  
Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings  
Victory home, though new rebellions raise  
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays  
Her broken league, to imp their serpent wings.  
O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand;  
For what can War, but endless war still breed,  
Till Truth and Right from Violence be freed,  
And Public Faith cleared from the shameful brand  
Of Public Fraud. In vain does Valour bleed  
While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

John Milton

In the years that followed the first Civil War, Fairfax retreated more and more into the background of affairs. Although nominally Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and in spite of his protests, the initiative was now taken by the more politically-minded members of the army command -Cromwell, Ireton and others. At the end of the first Civil War, Sir Jacob Astley had remarked prophetically, "You have now done your work and may go play, unless you will fall out among yourselves."<sup>1</sup> As anticipated by Astley, a bitter quarrel broke out between parliament,



ostensibly the master of the army but increasingly becoming its servant, and the army commanders.

The years 1646 and 1647 were filled with argument and conflict. Fearing disbandment without pay, the army mutinied on several occasions, and had to be beaten into submission by Cromwell and Ireton. The King's duplicity in his dealings with parliament forced Cromwell and his supporters to demand that he negotiate with the army instead. Beyond London, the countryside experienced the emergence of religious fanatics and political incendiaries, who looked forward to the "rule of Christ" and the removal of the "Norman yoke."<sup>2</sup> Fairfax wandered in the midst of this labyrinth, indecisive, puzzled and painfully aware that he lacked the political ability to deal with the situation. "For now the officers of the army were placed and displaced by the will of the new agitators," he wrote in his memoirs, "who, with violence, so carried all things, as it was above my power to restrain it."<sup>3</sup>

In June of 1647, and presumably without consulting Fairfax, Cromwell and Ireton seized the King and removed him to the custody of the army.<sup>4</sup> Although difficult to prove, it seems that Fairfax had no foreknowledge of their intentions. "For the General (who was but too innocent)," wrote Sir William Waller, "I am clearly of the opinion that he was a stranger to this design."<sup>5</sup> This blatant defiance of Fairfax's authority needs no further comment, and in





itself demonstrates that he had lost all control of events.

Fairfax visited the King, and later in his memoirs he revealed that he did not share Charles' confidence that a settlement could be reached through the army. "But before I took my leave of the King," he wrote, "he said to me, "Sir, I have as great an interest in the army as you." By which I plainly saw the broken reed he leaned upon."<sup>6</sup>

It is obvious that by this time Fairfax wanted to retire from the scene altogether. In a battle he knew the measure of his capabilities, but in political squabbles he laboured in uncertainty. "I must needs say," he wrote, "...I never gave my free consent to anything they did, but (being then undischarged of my place) they set my hand, by way of course, to all their papers; whether I consented or not."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Fairfax would have resigned at the end of 1647, had the King not escaped and returned the situation to the point where his military and not political services were required once again.

The second Civil War, unlike the first, was fought against the King himself, and not his "evil councillors." Charles, now referred to as "that man of blood" by the parliamentarians, did much by his actions in 1648 to ensure that he lost not only his crown, but his life as well. Swift and punitive campaigns quickly brought the second Civil War to an end. While Cromwell went to Wales, and then the north of England where he won the battle of Preston, Fairfax



attacked the royalists at Maidstone, in Kent,<sup>8</sup> and then pursued them to Colchester, in Essex. The siege of Colchester, which lasted for two months, was perhaps the grisliest of all the Civil Wars. The defenders were reduced to such extremities of want that "the bodies of dogs and horses, swarming as they were with maggots, were greedily devoured, and after the second week in August even this loathsome food began to fail."<sup>9</sup> When the town surrendered, on 28 August 1648, Fairfax departed from his usual clemency and had Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle executed.<sup>10</sup> By refusing to surrender when summoned, he reasoned, they had forfeited their right to quarter. It is very noticeable that the second Civil War saw a viciousness that had not been readily apparent in the first, and the royalists made great play of the fact that even the usually merciful Fairfax was also capable of savagery. The future held much worse, and Fairfax's actions at Colchester pale indeed when compared to the atrocities committed by the army in Ireland, in what one historian has appropriately called an "effusion of blood."<sup>11</sup>

When the second Civil War ended, Fairfax once again had to face the rigours of politics. A few months earlier, on 13 March 1648, Ferdinando Lord Fairfax had died at York of a gangrenous foot. He was sorely grieved "and much lamented" his father's death.<sup>12</sup> Ferdinando was buried at the churchyard at Otley, on 15 March.<sup>13</sup> Now styled Baron



Fairfax of Cameron, Fairfax was appointed to head a commission set up to try the King. That he accepted the appointment initially is evidence that Fairfax agreed with others that the King should be punished in some fashion. That the King was to be tried for his life came as an astonishing revelation, and he immediately refused to attend any more meetings.<sup>14</sup> His signature is noticeably absent from the death warrant, and one historian has actually suggested that perhaps Cromwell made sure that he was fully occupied elsewhere while the King went to the scaffold.<sup>15</sup> "My afflicted and troubled mind for it, and my earnest endeavours to prevent it," he wrote distressfully of the King's execution, "will, I hope, sufficiently testify to my abhorrence of the fact. And what might they not now do to the lower shrubs," he continued, "having thus cut down the cedar."<sup>16</sup>

The first action of the new Commonwealth of England was to subjugate Ireland to its rule. In many respects, the troubles of Ireland were dissimilar to those of England. Originally, the Irish had rebelled against the King, but were later joined by the marquis of Ormonde -the man who was ordered to bring them to heel. In 1649, parliament determined to deal with both. An army, under the command of Cromwell, was sent to beat the Irish to their knees. With an unprecedented demonstration of ferocity and cruelty, Cromwell repayed the rebels two-fold for the massacres of



The first of these is the fact that the
 government has been unable to
 maintain a stable
 currency. This has
 led to a
 loss of confidence
 in the
 government and
 a
 general
 feeling of
 despair.
 The
 second
 is the
 fact that
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 has
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 stable
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 This
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 is the
 fact that
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 has
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After much discussion, Fairfax announced that, "If we were assured of their coming with their army into England, I confess it were prudent for us to prevent them ...but what warrant have we to fall upon them unless we can be assured of their purpose to fall upon us?" Harrison answered that, "I think, under favour, there cannot be greater assurance or human probability of the intentions of any state than we have of theirs to invade our country." Fairfax replied, "Human probabilities are not sufficient grounds to make war upon a neighbouring nation, especially our brethren of Scotland...and therefore I must desire to be excused."<sup>20</sup>

On 25 June 1650, Fairfax wrote to Speaker William Lenthall and offered his resignation:

Having lately received from the Parliament a new commission as general of these and so determining my former, I saw it was fit for me seriously to consider how I might with a good conscience take that trust, and employment upon me; but finding debilities both in body and mind, occasioned by former actions and businesses, has caused me not to be free to undertake this new chance, so as I cannot but humbly desire to be excused of it, and that you would be pleased to represent this to the Parliament; which I hope will be received with that clearness which is intended; and that this may be no occasion of any ill effect, I pray God, what is wanting in me, He will make up in His goodness, that His name may have praise, and His people hearts to set up His honour in this nation which, is the prayer of, Thomas Fairfax....<sup>21</sup>

Fairfax's resignation was accepted, and on 26 June the Council of State declared war upon Scotland and Cromwell was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the parliamentary



forces.<sup>22</sup>

Fairfax took no part in the affairs of the Commonwealth after his resignation. He immediately returned to his estates in Yorkshire, and began to pick up the threads of the life he had left behind eight years before. At thirty-eight years of age, he left the services of a Parliament which now proceeded to destroy itself through internal dissension, and eventually paved the way for the regime of Cromwell.

Fairfax showed complete disinterest in events in London, and was quite content to let things happen as they might. He had played at politics, considering it to constitute part of his responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief of the army, but had been rudely awakened and buffeted by its sinister nature. Characteristically, he was not an intriguer; it went against the very grain of his disposition. He was candid and sincere in all that he did, and above all he lacked suspicion and duplicity. Fairfax had served parliament as a brilliant soldier, but could not respond to the demands of being a successful politician. For this reason, posterity remembers Fairfax for his soldiering, and ignores his political inability. The messianic thunderings of a Cromwell, and the cold and calculating genius of an Ireton, left him apprehensive and confused. His only consolation was that he could rest assured that his past services were greatly appreciated, and would not be hurriedly



forgotten.

Perhaps the only measure of Fairfax's ability is his astonishing military greatness. In 1642 and 1643, he and his father had kept the parliamentary cause alive in Yorkshire, in spite of overwhelming odds and gross deficiencies in both men and materiel. Militarily speaking, they had been completely beaten on several occasions, but simply refused to give in. The consequences for parliament would have been dire indeed if the Fairfaxes had given up the fight in the dark days of 1643. However, no matter how bleak the future looked, they always managed, by their sheer doggedness and perseverance, to scrape up enough men for another attack. Parliament, barely holding its own in the south, was afforded an opportunity to seek help from Scotland largely because of the Fairfaxes' success in preventing the combined strength of the royalist forces from descending upon London. .

Fairfax was a proponent of the maxim that attack is the best form of defense. Invariably, when Newcastle thought that he had finally crushed the parliamentarians in Yorkshire and could move his army south, Fairfax would suddenly strike with a mere handful of men and throw the royalist forces into confusion. His strategy in the greater part of the Yorkshire wars was of a "hit-and-run" nature. Attacking in the middle of the night, or at the first light of day, and often under the cover of snowstorms or pouring rain,



Fairfax's unorthodox tactics kept the Yorkshire royalists continually busy, and unable to play their part in the King's master plan. Surprise, speed and tenacity were the hallmarks of Fairfax's early campaigns in the north. Once the odds were evened by the addition of the Scottish army, the royalists were easily beaten at the battle of Marston Moor.

It is little wonder that parliament's choice of a new Commander-in-Chief fell upon Thomas Fairfax in February of 1645. The almost magical quality attached to his name, that roused and encouraged the troops in Yorkshire, preceded him into the south, where he soon gained the respect and admiration of the disgruntled remnants of the armies of Essex and Waller. His military genius readily apparent, Fairfax now demonstrated another facet of his already impressive talent. His powers of organisation, once given the necessary men and supplies, and the support of capable and experienced veterans like Skippon, enabled him to whip the southern armies into a formidable and irresistible fighting force.

Within a single month, April 1645, Fairfax and Skippon created an army which became the marvel and envy of western Europe, for its strength, efficiency and discipline. Within another two months, May and June of 1645, Fairfax had launched this new army into a campaign that ended with a shattering defeat for the King at Naseby.





Fairfax displayed yet another talent of his during this period. His ability to move an army rapidly, often at the astounding rate of thirteen miles a day, provided the impetus for the quick and successful completion of the western campaign. Combining the elements of surprise and speed, and anticipating his every movement, Fairfax completely outwitted Goring and destroyed him at Langport.

Fairfax had no equal when it came to sieges, and every castle or town that he invested eventually fell into his hands. Sir Ralph Hopton, a soldier of great capacity himself, knew that he had met his match in Fairfax, and for this reason surrendered and brought the bloodshed to a halt. Fairfax, as Markham has said, inspired his men "with the assurance of success, and made victory certain."<sup>23</sup> Ever generous and fair-minded, Fairfax was admired by both friends and enemies alike. Always trustworthy and sincere, he never once deviated from his belief that the cause that he had taken up arms for was right and just. At the end of his memoirs he wrote:

I hope that God will one day clear this action we undertook, so far as concerns His honour; and the integrity of such as faithfully served in it. For I cannot believe that such wonderful successes shall be given in vain. Though cunning and deceitful men must take shame to themselves; yet the purposes and determination of God shall have happy effects to His glory, and the comfort of His people....<sup>24</sup>

In 1660, and as the world fell down around Richard Cromwell, who had become Lord Protector on his father's



death in 1658, Fairfax made one last public appearance. By coming out of retirement when he did, it could be argued that Fairfax averted a fourth Civil War. The army raised by General John Lambert, to oppose General George Monck's march into England from Scotland, melted away and joined its old general.<sup>25</sup> Between them Fairfax and Monck, realising that the only solution to England's problems lay in the restoration of the House of Stuart, brought about the return of Charles II.<sup>26</sup> On his thirtieth birthday, 29 May 1660, Charles II entered London,<sup>27</sup> and received the unanimous support and welcome of his subjects.

It is perhaps ironic, that the horse upon which he rode had been given to him by Thomas Fairfax<sup>28</sup> -the man who had done more than anybody to defeat his father in the first and second Civil Wars.



NOTES TO EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in G. Davies, The Early Stuarts 1603-1660 (London, 1959), p.142.

<sup>2</sup>See C. Hill, Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century (New York, 1967), chapter vii, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Fairfax, p.357.

<sup>4</sup>R.W. Ramsey, Henry Ireton (London, 1949), pp.55-56.

<sup>5</sup>Sir William Waller, Vindication of the Character and Conduct of Sir William Waller, Knight (London, 1793), p.140.

<sup>6</sup>Fairfax, p.360.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.363.

<sup>8</sup>FC Civil War, ii, 32-34. Sir Thomas Fairfax to Edward, earl of Manchester, Speaker of the House of Peers, 4 June 1648.

<sup>9</sup>Gardiner, Civil War, iv, 199.

<sup>10</sup>J.H. Round, "The Case of Lucas and Lisle," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (1894), New Series, viii, 157-80.

<sup>11</sup>A. Fraser, Cromwell, Our Chief of Men (London, 1973), pp.326-57.

<sup>12</sup>Whitelocke, ii, 284.

<sup>13</sup>"The Parish Register of Otley," p.253.

<sup>14</sup>C.V. Wedgwood, The Trial of Charles I (London, 1964), p.120.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p.221.

<sup>16</sup>Fairfax, pp.361-62.



<sup>17</sup>C. Hill, God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (New York, 1970), pp.112-27.

<sup>18</sup>Ashley, Generals, p.19.

<sup>19</sup>Kenyon, p.328.

<sup>20</sup>Whitelocke, iii, 207-11.

<sup>21</sup>Slingsby, pp.340-41.

<sup>22</sup>Markham, p.361.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p.400.

<sup>24</sup>Fairfax, p.364.

<sup>25</sup>W.H. Dawson, Cromwell's Understudy: Life and Times of General John Lambert (London, 1938), pp.377-78.

<sup>26</sup>G. Davies, The Restoration of Charles II 1658-1660 (London, 1969), pp.177-80.

<sup>27</sup>M. Ashley, Charles II: The Man and the Statesman (St. Albans, Hertfordshire, 1973), p.111.

<sup>28</sup>A. Woolrych, "Yorkshire and the Restoration," The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal (1956-58), p.507.





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